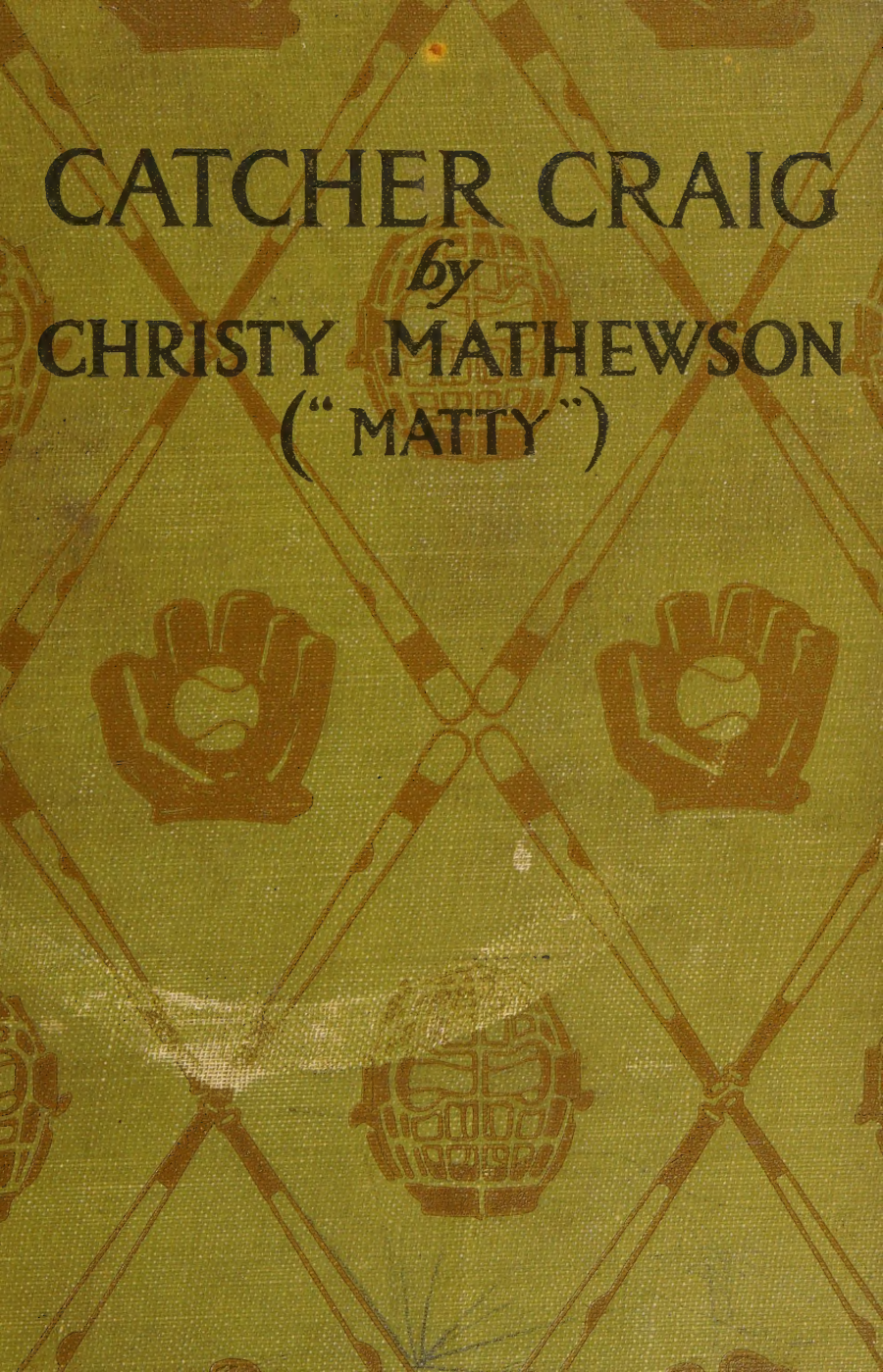
# CATCHER CRAIG

*by*

## CHRISTY MATHEWSON

("MATTY")



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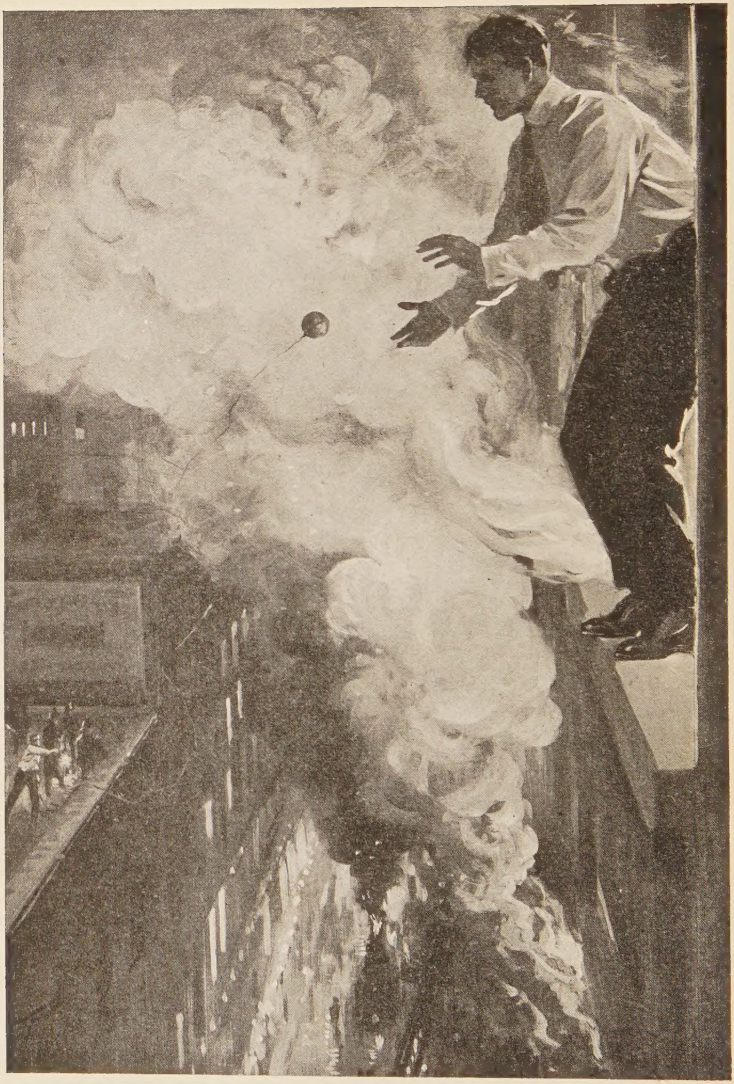

A breathless silence then. The figure on the ledge settled back (*page* 342)

# CATCHER CRAIG

BY

CHRISTY MATHEWSON

AUTHOR OF

PITCHING IN A PINCH, ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

CHARLES M. RELYEA

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## ILLUSTRATIONS

A breathless silence then. The figure on the ledge settled back (page 342) . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

"Well, Craig, so you found us, eh?" asked the short man, with a smile and a firm clasp of the hand . . . . . 36

And above the din and through the red dust-cloud sounded Mr. York's voice, "*He's out!*" . . . . . 198

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# CHAPTER I

## SAM MAKES A PURCHASE

It was a window to gladden any boy's heart. Behind the big plate-glass pane were baseball bats of all sorts and prices, masks and protectors, gloves and mitts, balls peeking temptingly forth from their tin-foil wrappers, golf clubs and bags, running shoes and apparel, and many, many other things to send a chap's hand diving into his pocket.

Sam Craig's hand was already there, jingling the few coins he had with him, while his gaze wandered raptly over the enticing array. Always, though, it returned to the display of catcher's mitts.

He was seventeen, a sturdy, brown-haired youth with a well-tanned face from which dark grey eyes looked untroubledly forth. As he stood there in front of Cummings and Wright's window his feet were planted apart, his attitude seeming to say: "Here I am and here I stay!" And the resolute

expression of his face backed up the assertion of his body, so that, had you for any reason wished to move Sam from in front of that window, it would never have occurred to you to try force. If persuasion failed you'd have let him stay there!

You wouldn't have called Sam handsome, although, judged separately, his features were all good. His nose was straight and short, his eyes thoughtful, his mouth fairly wide and firm, and his chin purposeful. What you might have mistaken for a dimple in the cleft of the chin was in reality only a tiny scar, the result of collision with the point of a newly sharpened pencil caused by a fall on an icy sidewalk many years before. When accounting for that scar Sam was wont to indulge in one of his infrequent jokes. There was, he would tell you, a queer coincidence about it; it had happened in Faber-ary. If, through ignorance of the brand of pencils affected in Amesville, you missed the point of the joke, Sam didn't explain it. He had evolved that pun all himself, and, not being addicted to airy persiflage, thought rather well of it. Consequently, if you didn't catch it, Sam thought poorly of your sense of

humour and wasted no effort on you. He appreciated jokes when he heard them, but seldom perpetrated one himself. And his appreciation was seldom demonstrative. When others laughed Sam confined himself to a slight lifting of one corner of his mouth and a quizzical expression in his calm grey eyes. When others doubled themselves over and frankly shouted their amusement, Sam merely chuckled.

He was captain of the Amesville High School Baseball Team. When, two days after the final contest with Petersburg, a contest which had resulted in a victory for Amesville and given the Brown-and-Blue the season's championship, the players had met to choose a leader for the next year, the honour had gone to Sam. Probably had Tom Pollock, whose heady pitching had done more than anything else to win the Petersburg series, been in his final year at high school, the captaincy would have gone to him by acclamation. But Tom was still a junior and it was the custom to elect a senior, and, with Tom out of it, the choice fell naturally on Sam. The school at large was well satisfied. Sam Craig was well liked. It would be stretching a point to say that he was

popular, for he was quiet, unassuming, and kept pretty much to himself, and in consequence made friends slowly. Certainly he was not socially popular as was Sidney Morris, nor was he hailed as a hero as was Tom Pollock. But he was liked and respected, and, if he wasn't called a hero, few failed to realise that his steady, always cool-headed and sometimes brilliant work behind the bat had had more than a little to do with the successful outcome of the season just finished. Sam's election had been made unanimous, Sam had faltered a much embarrassed speech of acceptance, and the team had disbanded for the summer.

To-day, a bright, warm morning in the latter part of June and just over a week after the election, Sam was seriously debating a momentous question, which was whether to deplete his slender hoard of spending-money for one of the brand-new mitts lying so temptingly beyond the glass, or to save his money and make his old one, a thing of many honourable scars, do him until next spring. If, he told himself, he had a lot of money, there were many things in that window he would buy: a new ball—his own had been several times restitched—a new mask and—yes, by jingo, if he could afford

it!—one of those dandy black-tipped bats bearing the facsimile signature of a noted Big Leaguer. More than once his hand came out of his pocket and more than once he half turned away, but each time his fingers went back to the coins again, and, at last, he entered the wide, hospitably open door of the big hardware and sporting-goods store. If he had not done so this story would have been far different, for more than the purchase of a catcher's mitt resulted from his visit that morning to Cummings and Wright's.

The front of the store, to the left as you entered, was devoted to the sporting goods. The department was only about two years old, but already it had thrice outgrown its limit, until now it occupied fully a third of the store's space. There were racks of golf clubs, shelves filled with enticing boxes, handsome show-cases over which a red-blooded boy could hang entranced for a long time, polished counters holding things cunningly displayed, and, between window and cases, an oak-topped desk, at which a boy of about Sam's age was busily writing. He was a capable-looking fellow, with much red-brown hair and a pair of frank and honest blue eyes and a nice smile. And

the smile appeared the minute he glanced up from the letter he was writing and glimpsed Sam over the top of the desk.

"Hello!" he said, jumping up. "Haven't seen you since they made you captain, Sam. How are you?"

"All right," said Sam, viewing him, with his quizzical smile, across the bat-rack. "Say, Tom, I want to buy a mitt. How much do I have to pay?"

"Oh, we never tell you that till we've shown you the goods," laughed Tom Pollock. "What you want is one of these, Sam. It's just like your old one, I think, and you can't beat it at any price. We've got them for more money, but——"

"This is all right, thanks." Sam thrust a hand into the black leather mitt and thumped it experimentally with his right fist. "How much, Tom?"

"Well, you get the team discount, Sam." Tom tore a piece of paper from a pad and figured on it. Then he pushed it toward Sam, and Sam read the result, hesitated momentarily, and then nodded.

"All right," he said, "I'll take it. You needn't do it up."

"Going to wear it home?" asked Tom, with a laugh. "By the way, Morris was talking the other day about getting the Blues together again this summer. You'll play if we do, won't you?"

"I guess so. I don't know yet. I'm looking for a job, Tom. Know anyone who wants to hire a strong, willing chap like me?"

Tom smiled and shook his head. "I'm afraid I don't, Sam."

"I went over to see Harper at the mills yesterday and got a sort of half promise of a job in the packing-room later. I'm not crazy about that, though. Maybe I'm lazy, but they sure do work you hard over there. I worked in the stock-room one summer and nearly passed out! And hot!"

"Must be," Tom agreed. "Wish I did know of something, Sam, but——" He paused and glanced toward his desk. Then, "By Jove!" he muttered. "I wonder—Look here, Sam, mind going away from home?"

"How far? Where to?"

"Indian Lake."

"Where's that?"

"Up toward Mendon. About a hundred and twenty miles north of here."

"What's up there? Say, it isn't peddling books, is it? I tried that one time and nearly starved to death. Sold four sets of Murray's Compendium of Universal History and cleared just eleven dollars and eighty cents in a month!"

Tom smiled. "No, it's—— Here's—here's the letter I got this morning. You can read it for yourself. I don't know why they wrote to me unless this chap has bought goods from us. I haven't looked him up yet."

Sam took the brief typewritten letter and read it. It was addressed to "Manager Sporting Goods Department, Cummings and Wright, Amesville, Ohio," and was as follows:

"Dear Sir:—Do you happen to know of a young man who will accept a position in a boys' camp this summer, July 5 to September 13? We've only been running one year and can't offer big pay, but we'll provide comfortable sleeping quarters and plenty of good food and pay five a week. If you know of anyone, please drop me a line right away. Applicant must be moral, know something about handling boys—we take them from eleven to fifteen—and able to help instruct in athletics. References required. Thank-

ing you in advance for any trouble I am putting you to,

"Respectfully,

"WARREN LANGHAM, Director."

The letter was typed on a sheet of paper bearing at the top the legend: "The Wigwam; a Summer Camp for Boys, Indian Lake, Ohio. Warren Bradley Langham, A.M., Director."

Sam read it twice, the second time more thoughtfully. Then he looked questioningly at Tom.

"Interest you?" asked the latter. "If I could take it I'd do it in a minute, Sam."

"Yes, but this man's looking for someone a heap older than I am, I guess, Tom, although he doesn't say anything about age. 'A young man'; that's all."

"Well, aren't you a young man?"

"I'm young," agreed Sam, "but I'm no man yet. Anyway, I suppose I couldn't go so far. There's just my mother and Nell at home——"

"It would be only about nine weeks, though. The pay isn't big, but——"

"The pay's all right, Tom, because I'd be getting my board, you see. The only thing would

be leaving my folks alone so long. Still——" Sam thoughtfully fondled the catcher's mitt.

"You could give him all the references he wanted," urged Tom.

"Who from?" asked the other doubtfully. "What sort of references?"

"Why, from your minister and your school principal, of course."

"Oh! Well, what about handling boys? I never handled any. And what about helping to instruct in athletics?"

"He doesn't say that you must be *used* to handling them; only that you must know something about it. You do, don't you?"

Sam looked blank. "Do I?" he asked.

"Of course you do! Any fellow does who has sense and has been a kid himself." Tom laughed. "You're too modest, Sam. Throw out your chest! Aren't you captain of the Amesville High School Nine? As for instructing in athletics, why, all that means is that you'll have to play ball with the kids and arrange running and jumping stunts and—— Say, you can swim, can't you?"

"Yes." Sam seemed quite decided about that.

"There you are, then! You take the letter and write to Mr. Whatshisname right off."

"I'd like to," mused Sam. "I'd like the job."

"Take it then! I'll drop the man a note and tell him I've got just the fellow for him; baseball captain, all-around athlete, fine swimmer, highly moral, and a wonder at handling boys! How's that?"

"Pack of lies," replied Sam, with a smile. "You let me take this letter and I'll think it over tonight and talk to mother and Nell about it and see you in the morning. If they think it's all right maybe I'll try for it. Just the same, I know mighty well he'll think I'm too young."

"In years, maybe," said Tom, "but in experience, Sam!" Tom shook his head knowingly. "It's experience that counts, my boy."

"You're a chump," said Sam. "Mind if I take this, though?"

"Not a bit. Let me know in the morning, Sam. Joking aside, I think it would be a first-rate thing. You'd come back in September simply full of health and able to lick your weight in bear-cats. We'll miss you, though, if we get the ball team

together again. Who could we get to catch for us, Sam?"

"Buster Healey."

"That's so, he might do. Anything else I can sell you, Sam?"

"No, I guess not. Did I pay you for this?"

"Not yet. You needn't if you don't want to. Let me charge it to you."

"No, thanks," said Sam hurriedly, diving for his money. "If I get that place I'll need this mitt, I guess. I've been trying to persuade myself all the morning that I really ought to have it."

"Another reason for accepting the job, Sam," said Tom cheerfully. "It'll justify your extravagance."

"That's putting 'em over," said Sam, with a chuckle. "'Justify your extravagance!' Gee, Tom, that's real language, that is!"

"Yes, right in the groove, Sam. Say, I'd like to get out and pitch a few. What are you doing this evening? Let's get a ball and see how it feels. Will you? Good stuff! Drop around here at five and get me."

## CHAPTER II

### OFF FOR CAMP

Sam gave his new mitt a good try-out that evening. He and Tom and Tom's particular chum, Sid Morris, took possession of the alley behind the hardware store and, admiringly regarded by a dozen or so small boys, pitched and caught until supper-time. Sidney, a slim, lithe, handsome chap of nearly eighteen, had been told about The Wigwam and, like Tom, sighed because he could not accept the position himself.

"I'll tell you what, though, Sam," he said, as he made an imaginary swing at the ball just before it thumped into Sam's new glove, "if you go up there Tom and I will come and visit you for a day or two. I suppose they'd let us, wouldn't they, Tom?"

"I don't see how they could stop us visiting the place, but they might object to our staying overnight. Here goes for a knuckle-ball, Sam. Watch it." But the attempt was not successful and Tom

shook his head as the ball came back to him. "I guess I'll never make much out of that," he said. "What's that, Sam? Four fingers? I can't see very well. All right, here she goes." A slow ball sped across the imaginary plate and Sidney, making believe to swing and miss, uttered a disappointed grunt and angrily slanged a non-existant umpire, to the delight of the gallery. It was time to stop then, and, pocketing his ball, Tom accompanied Sam and Sidney to Main Street and, after Sidney had jumped a car to hurry home to dinner, detained Sam a minute on a corner.

"Made up your mind yet?" he asked.

Sam hesitated a moment. "Mother wants me to try for it," he said, "and Nell, too, but I don't know as I ought to leave them so long."

"Well, you know best, Sam. Only, if you can do it you'd better. You know as well as I do that there's mighty little chance of a fellow's getting work in Amesville in summer, except at the mills; and they don't pay anything over there."

Sam nodded agreement. "I guess," he answered thoughtfully, "I'll write and see what Mr. Langham says. I suppose, though, he will tell me I'm too young."

"How would it do," asked Tom, "to say nothing about your age? He didn't seem particular about that, you know. Just tell him you're in your senior year at high school and are captain of the nine; and that you think you could hold down the place to the King's taste, and so on!"

"I might, only—I'd feel pretty cheap if I got up there and he told me I wouldn't do. Besides, it wouldn't be quite honest, I guess."

"I suppose not. No, you'd better tell him you're nearly eighteen."

"But I'm not," objected Sam gravely. "I won't be until December."

"Then tell him you're well over seventeen," laughed Tom. "Anyway, make yourself out as old as you can, you fussy old chump! And don't be too modest. I don't know but that I ought to see that letter before you send it, Sam."

Sam shook his head. "I'll do it all right," he said. "And you write to him, too, if you don't mind."

"I'll do it this evening. So long. You ought to get an answer by Friday, I should think. I hope it comes out all right, Sam."

"So do I," said Sam soberly. "It would be a

dandy job if I could get it. Good night, Tom, and thank you for telling me about it."

That wasn't an easy letter to write, as Sam discovered later when, with the assistance of his mother and sister, he set about its composition. Nell, a pretty girl a year older than Sam, scored his first draft indignantly.

"Why, you haven't said a thing about what you can do," she exclaimed. "You've just told him what you *can't!* The idea of saying that you're a fair swimmer! You know very well, Sam, that you're a perfect wonder in the water."

"Pshaw, lots of fellows can swim better than I do."

"No one around here, anyway. And you practically tell him that you don't know a thing about looking after young boys."

"I don't!"

"But you don't have to say so, do you? Now, you write that all over and—I tell you what, Sam! Write it just as if you were trying to get the place for someone else!"

Finally both Nell and Mrs. Craig approved, and Sam made a clean copy of the letter, slipped it into an envelope, stamped and addressed it, and

went out to the mail box with it so it would be gathered up at eleven-thirty and go off on the early morning train. Now that he had made up his mind to get the position if he could he was impatient to learn his fate.

But three days passed without any response and he had begun to think that nothing was to come of his application, when one afternoon a messenger boy brought a telegram. It was extremely brief.

"Mail references immediately. LANGHAM."

"It doesn't look as though he thought you too young," said Tom when, later, Sam dropped in at Cummings and Wright's to tell the news. "If he did he wouldn't bother with your references. I guess you've got it, Sam."

And Sam acknowledged that it looked so. The letters of reference went off that evening, one from the High School principal and one from the minister of the church Sam attended. Both were, he considered, undeservedly flattering. They bore immediate result. Just thirty-four hours later another telegram arrived, this time not quite so brief.

"Satisfactory. Join camp July fifth. Rail to East Mendon, stage to Indian Lake. Bring grey flannel trousers, blue sleeveless shirt, sweater, sneakers, mackintosh. LANGHAM."

They referred to that telegram at intervals all day. Sam was a bit troubled because it said nothing about socks or a hat, but Nell said she supposed Mr. Langham gave him credit for enough sense to bring such things without being told.

"He doesn't say whether the sweater has to be any special colour, either," mused Sam. "Mine's grey."

"That thing!" exclaimed Nell scathingly. "Why, mother's darned that and darned it, Sam. It isn't fit to be seen in. You must have a new one."

"Gee, if I buy a new sweater besides all those other things I won't have any money left! I asked Miller, at the station, what the fare to Indian Lake is and he said it's four dollars and sixty cents."

"I don't care, Sam, you can't take that old sweater. You can get a new one for three dollars, I guess."

"Can't afford it," said Sam decisively.

"Then I'll present it to you. I've got a lot of money."

"I think," said Mrs. Craig, "it would be nice if Nellie and I bought those things for you, dear. How much would they cost, do you think?"

Sam demurred, but in the end they had their way, and the next morning Sam set out to Cummings and Wright's with his precious telegram in hand and laid the matter before Tom Pollock.

"So you got it!" exclaimed Tom. "Gee, but I'm awfully glad, Sam! Shake! Now let's see what you need. What shade of blue do you suppose that means? Dark, I guess. Here you are, then. Eighty-five cents each. You'll need two of them. Sneakers are ninety-five and a dollar and a quarter. Better pay the difference, Sam. The cheaper ones aren't much. What about flannel trousers? I'm afraid—Oh, you've got a pair? All right. Then that leaves only the sweater. What colour?"

"It doesn't say. What do you think?"

"Guess it doesn't matter, Sam. Grey's usually the best because it won't fade and doesn't show dirt, but you can have blue or red or white or——"

"Grey, I guess; and not very expensive."

"Here's one for two and a half and here's a better one for three and here's——"

"I guess this three-dollar one will do, Tom. Do I get anything off on this truck?"

"Certainly; fifteen off, Sam. That makes it—let me see—five dollars and six cents; call it five dollars even, Sam. What about the raincoat?"

"I've got an old one that will do, I guess. You see, I don't want to spend very much, because the fare up there and back comes to over nine dollars, and that's two weeks' wages."

"He didn't say anything about paying your fare, then?"

Sam shook his head. "He wouldn't, would he?"

"I don't know. Seems to me he ought to pay it one way, at least, though, Sam. I'd mention it to him, anyway."

"Maybe I will," replied Sam doubtfully. "Well, I guess that's all, then. I'll take these things along with me. How many boys do you suppose there will be up there, Tom?"

"I don't know. Maybe forty or fifty. And look here, Sam." Tom walked around the counter when he had finished tying up the bundle and

seated himself on the edge, swinging his legs. "Don't do this," he explained, "when there's customers around. Look here, Sam. About those kids, now. Take my advice and start 'em off right."

"How do you mean, Tom?"

"I mean make 'em understand right away that you won't take any nonsense from them. Of course, a summer camp's different from a school, I suppose, and there's a lot more—more give-and-take between the councillors and the boys, but it's a good idea, I guess, to make the kids understand that while you love 'em all to death you aren't going to tell 'em to do a thing more than once. Get the idea? Kind but firm, Sam."

"Anyone would think you invented boys' camps," said Sam, with a twinkle. Tom laughed.

"Never you mind whether I did or not, Sam. You do as I tell you and you'll find things going easier. You aren't enough older than the boys to make 'em much scared of you, so you want to hold the reins pretty tight at first. No charge for the advice. When do you go?"

"Seven-ten on the fifth. That gets me to East Mendon at eleven-twenty. Then there's a stage-

coach or something that goes over to the Lake at two."

"I'll go down and see you off, Sam, and wish you luck."

And a week later Tom kept his promise. He and Sidney escorted Sam to the train, Tom carrying the traveller's old-fashioned yellow leather valise and Sid his raincoat, leaving Sam the free use of both hands with which to satisfy himself every two or three moments that his ticket was safe. There was one excruciating minute when they reached Locust Street, and were in sight of the station, when Sam couldn't find the ticket in any of his pockets and blank dismay overspread his countenance. He was on the verge of retracing his steps when Sidney patiently reminded him that just one block back he had placed the precious pasteboard in the lining of his straw hat for safe-keeping. Sam said, "Oh!" and looked extremely foolish, and, amidst the laughter of his guard of honour, the journey began again.

News of Sam's departure had spread through town and there was quite a gathering of friends to see him off. Buster Healey was there, with a bouquet consisting of two sprays of gladiolus,

mostly in bud, which Buster was suspected of having acquired by the simple expedient of reaching through someone's garden fence; and Tommy Hughes was there, and Joe Kenny, and half a dozen more; and there was a good deal of noise and rough-house until the train pulled into the station and Sam climbed aboard. You might have thought that Sam was leaving for the Grand Tour or for a year in Darkest Africa. All kinds of advice was showered on him. He was instructed not to put his head out the window, not to speak to strangers, not to take any wooden money, and not to lose his ticket. Then the train moved and a cheer went up and a much embarrassed Sam waved good-bye from a window. And at that moment Buster discovered that Sam had left his flowers on a baggage truck, and rescued them and raced the length of the platform before he was finally able to hurl them in at the window. So began the journey.

## CHAPTER III

### "THE WIGWAM"

SAM had never done much travelling. He had been to Columbus twice and had journeyed around more or less within a fifty-mile radius of Amesville, but penetrating a hundred and twenty-odd miles into the wilds of northern Ohio was something new and not a little exciting. There had never, particularly since his father had died, been much money for railroad tickets and sight-seeing. Sam's father had been a railroad engineer, and a good one. For many years when Sam was just a little chap Mr. Craig had held the throttle on the big Mogul engine that had pulled the Western Mail through Amesville. Sam didn't see a great deal of his father in those days, for Mr. Craig "laid-over" in Amesville but twice a week, and the days when he did see him were red-letter days. He had been very fond of his dad, and very proud of him, too; and it had been Sam's

earnest desire to grow up quick and be an engineer too. When, however, in Sam's twelfth year, Mr. Craig returned home for the last time on a stretcher to live but a few hours, Sam lost that desire. For once the engineer had not been held to blame for an accident; a muddle-headed despatcher had sent the Western Mail crashing into a through freight between sidings; and so the railroad paid a pension to the widow. On this the family had lived until Sam, first, and then Nell, had begun to supplement the pension money with small earnings. Sam had delivered papers, worked in the mill as stock-boy, and tried his hand at several other things, while Nell, having finished school the spring before, was now a public stenographer with a tiny room of her own in Amesville's new office building, and was a little more than making expenses.

The first thrill of excitement wore off after a half-hour or so, and Sam, tired of watching the view from the car window, picked up the magazine he had bought and settled back to read. The train was not a fast one, and it stopped at a good many stations and seemed disinclined at each to take up its journey again. Nevertheless, it event-

ually did arrive at East Mendon, and Sam anxiously collected his belongings and alighted. Inquiries elicited the information that the stage started at two o'clock from the other side of the platform, shortly after the arrival of the through express. Consequently Sam had a full two hours and a half to wait. He checked his bag and coat at the station and started out in search of dinner. East Mendon was a small place, hardly more than a full-grown village, and his choice of eating-places was not large. The Commercial Hotel seemed to be the principal hostelry, but Sam knew that if he went there he would have to pay at least seventy-five cents for his meal, and seventy-five cents was about fifty cents more than he cared to spend. At last, on a side street, he came across a small and dingy restaurant which advertised the principal dishes of the day's menu on a blackboard outside. Sam, his feet spread well apart and his hands in his trousers pockets, studied the list thoughtfully.

"Beef Stew with Dumplings, 15 cents." "Corn Beef Hash with Bread and Butter, 15 cents." "Baked White Fish and Fried Potatoes, 20 cents." "Ribs of Beef with Browned Potatoes, 25 cents."

"Vegatable Soup with Bread and Butter, 10 cents."

Sam's eyes twinkled. "Me for that, I guess," he said to himself. "Vegetable soup with two A's sounds good. And maybe a cup of good hot coffee and a piece of pie. I'm not awfully hungry, anyhow."

The "vegatable" soup was good and there was plenty of it, and even if the bread proved so crumbly that he found himself breading the butter instead of buttering the bread, he made out very well. But the good coffee didn't materialize. There was coffee, and it was hot, but Sam couldn't pronounce it good. Nor was the pie much better. He suspected the little shock-haired proprietor of having held and cherished that pie for a long, long time!

Afterwards he wandered back to the principal street of the village and bought three very green apples for a nickel and munched them while he tried to find interest in the store windows. But the East Mendon stores were neither large nor flourishing, and their window displays were not at all enthralling. It was still only slightly after twelve-thirty as, having exhausted the enter-

tainments of the village, he went back to the station, got his magazine from his bag, and made himself as comfortable as he could in a corner of the small waiting-room. It was hot and close in there, and smelled of dust and train smoke, but he found a good story in the magazine and was soon lost to everything but the adventures of the hero. That first story was so interesting that, having finished it, he started another, after a cursory glance about the room which was now beginning to fill up. He was halfway through the second story when the express came thundering in with much screeching of brake-shoes. The event promised excitement and so he slipped his magazine in a pocket of his coat, took up his bag, and went out on the platform with the other occupants of the room.

It seemed at first glance that everyone was getting out of the express and Sam had to flatten himself against the station wall to keep from being trod on. To his momentary surprise, most of the arrivals appeared to be boys; there must, he thought, be a hundred of them! Then it dawned on him that he was getting his first look at his future charges. When, presently, the express went on again and the crowd on the platform had

sorted itself out, he saw that the hundred boys really numbered only about thirty or forty. In age they seemed between twelve and fifteen, and they were of all sorts; short boys and tall boys, fat boys and thin boys, quiet boys and noisy boys. Each had his bag beside him and most of them were pestering the baggage-man about their trunks. Suddenly into the mêlée about that exasperated official pushed a broad-shouldered, capable-looking man of twenty-two or three years. He had a sun-browned face and wore a straw hat with a yellow-and-blue band around it.

"Now then, fellows!" Sam heard him say briskly. "Every one across to the other platform, please. I'll take charge of your checks."

In a minute order grew out of chaos and the boys, yielding their trunk checks, went off around the station. Sam followed. Two stage-coaches and four three-seated carriages were backed up to the platform and the boys were scrambling for outside seats on the coaches. Suit-cases and bags were being piled on the roofs, and pandemonium again reigned until, as before, the man with the yellow-and-blue hat-band appeared and took charge. "That's enough on top now! Pile inside,

you chaps. That'll do. The rest of you get into the hacks. Room for one more here, though. You going to Indian Lake?"

This to Sam, who was waiting for a chance to find a seat. Sam assented and squeezed into a rear seat of one of the stages, aware of the other's puzzled regard. Evidently the man with the coloured hat-band thought Sam a bit old to be going to The Wigwam, and Sam wondered what Mr. Langham would think! He was quite certain that this was not Mr. Langham. First, because the coloured hat-band chap was keeping a sharp eye on a huge suit-case marked "A. A. G.," and, second, because it stood to reason that Mr. Langham was a much older man.

Possibly the boys, too, thought Sam rather too mature to be one of them, for they favoured him with many curious glances as he squeezed into his seat. He still retained his valise and, as there was no place on the floor for it, he had to take it in his lap and drape his raincoat over it. That battered, old-fashioned bag occasioned more than one amused look and whispered comment.

After they were all seated a long wait ensued. A big wagon was backed up to the platform and

the baggage-man and the drivers began the loading of the trunks. There were a lot of them, but fortunately many were of the small steamer variety. Sam, whose entire wardrobe was contained between the bulging sides of his valise, wondered at those trunks. Finally the last one was aboard, restless youths who had slipped from their places scuttled back to them, the man with the hat-band seated himself beside the driver of one of the carriages and, with a cheer, the procession of vehicles set out.

Sam had never ridden in an old-style stage-coach before and he found the experience more novel than comfortable. The body swayed amazingly on its leather springs, and when, presently, they were on the rough country road, bumped up and down most erratically. Sam held tight to his bag, braced his feet against the floor, and watched the landscape unfold. Most of the way the road was bordered with woods, although occasionally there was a clearing and, now and then, a small farm. The road wound and turned up hill and down and the horses kept at an even trot. The more adventurous spirits on top of the coaches cheered and shouted and sang, but Sam's

companions inside were more subdued. He sat next a small boy of perhaps thirteen, who looked rather depressed and homesick. Sam tried conversation with him, but it was not a success. After a half-hour or so a louder cheer than usual came from outside, and Sam, looking ahead, saw a blue, sun-lit lake below them, lying in the green bowl of the wooded hills. Then it was lost to sight again and they began the descent, the brakes scraping hard against the big wheels as the coach swayed and bumped. Five minutes later they had arrived.

Sam descended before a large many-windowed wooden building, hardly more than a shed in appearance. A wide uncovered porch ran across the front of it. The building was so new that only the roof had weathered. Beyond it was a second of similar size and appearance, and beyond that, again, on slightly higher ground, was a smaller structure. The buildings faced the lake, the shore of which was some fifty yards distant. Behind the clearing the forest of birch and maples and oaks, with an occasional pine or hemlock, gave enticing glimpses of shadowed paths, but about the camp were few trees left standing, and of

these, one had been shorn of its branches and bore, floating lazily from its tip, a white flag with a blue pyramid, doubtless intended to represent an Indian wigwam. There was little breeze to-day and the sun beat down hotly, and Sam looked longingly into the dim recess seen beyond the wide, open door of the nearer building.

With the arrival of the foremost stage three men came down the steps. One was a short, stocky gentleman, brisk and alert, who wore knickerbockers and golf stockings and a soft white shirt, and whose round face seemed at first glance to be all brown Vandyke beard and rubber-rimmed Mandarin spectacles. He was followed by two younger men, one not much more than a boy and the other somewhere about thirty. Unlike the older man, they each wore camp costume; flannel trousers belted over a blue sleeveless shirt, and brown "sneakers." It was the short man in knickerbockers who now took command. One by one, the arrivals were shaken by the hand and passed on to the older of the two councillors, who, in turn, directed them to one or the other of the larger buildings. The short man knew many of the boys by name and greeted them warmly, and these,

addressing him as "Chief," seemed equally pleased at the meeting. If he did not know the name of a boy, he asked it and, on being told, said briskly, "Oh, yes! Well, Jones, I'm glad to know you. Mr. Haskins, this is Jones. Just look after him, please." And so Jones or Smith, or whatever his name might be, shook hands again and was finally sent trudging on into one or the other of the dormitories.

Sam stood aside and waited until the boys had been distributed. Then, formulating a little speech of introduction, he moved toward where the short man and the man with the coloured hat-band were shaking hands. But his speech was not required. "Well, Craig, so you found us, eh?" asked the short man, with a smile and a firm clasp of the hand. "Very glad to see you. My name is Langham. Mr. Gifford I suppose you know."

The man with the coloured hat-band explained, however, that they had not met. "I saw you at the station," he said, "but I wasn't sure that you were one of us. Very stupid of me. Well, let's go and get into some comfortable togs. I suppose Craig is in The Tepee, Chief?"

"Well, Craig, so you found us, eh?" asked the short man, with a smile and a firm clasp of the hand

"Yes. If Haskins is there, ask him to come out and show the men about the trunks, please. By the way, I thought we'd better get them into the water about four."

Sam was surprised until he realized that "them" meant the boys and not the trunks. He followed Mr. Gifford to the further dormitory, climbed a flight of four steps, crossed the unroofed porch, and entered through a wide doorway. For a moment the sudden change from the sunlight to the dimmer light inside confused him. Presently, though, he was examining his new home with interest.

The building was of a width that accommodated two rows of cots, one at each side, and left a wide passage between. At the farther end of the passage a second door stood wide open, framing a picture of green leaves in shadow and sunlight. On each side of the long room were many square openings, which did duty as windows. They were not sashed, but were provided with wooden shutters which opened inward and hooked back against the walls. In all the time that Sam was there the shutters were closed but once, and then only on one side of the dormitory. There were

twelve cots in one row and eight in the other. Midway on the side holding the fewer cots was a big rough-stone fireplace, and in front of it a table and chairs. At the foot of each cot was a shallow closet with hooks for garments below and some shelves above. Three large kerosene lamps hung from the roof.

Sam's cot was the first one inside the door on the left. Mr. Gifford's was opposite. At the head of each was a small stand holding a hand-lamp, and Mr. Gifford explained that the councillors were permitted to keep these burning after the dormitory lights were out. Sam followed the example of Mr. Gifford and the boys and changed into camp uniform, stowing the rest of his belongings in the tiny closet. Many of the youngsters were already scampering about in their new costumes.

"The Chief tells me you're going to help me with athletics," said Mr. Gifford from across the passage as he dragged on a pair of faded grey flannel trousers. "What's your line?"

"Line?" asked Sam.

"I mean what do you go in for principally?"

"Oh! Baseball principally."

"That's good. We play a good deal of it. The

fellows seem to get more fun out of it than anything else, except, maybe, swimming. You swim, of course?"

"Yes."

"Well, we'll have a talk this evening and map things out. Now, if you're ready, we'll go out and have a look around, and see what's to be done. There's usually a good deal to attend to the first day."

Satisfying himself that their assistance was not needed in the distribution of trunks, Mr. Gifford took Sam about the camp. They looked in at the other dormitory, known as The Wigwam, which was not materially different from The Tepee; and then visited the third building.

"This," said Mr. Gifford, "is the dining-hall. The fellows call it the Grubbery. There are four tables, you see. The Chief sits at the head of this one and the rest of us fellows take the others. That doesn't leave one for you, though, does it? Guess the Chief will put you at the foot of his. The fellows take turns at setting the tables and clearing them. We have a splendid cook and plenty of good things to eat. You won't go hungry, Craig. Speaking of that——"

Mr. Gifford led the way across the hall and through a swinging door into a kitchen. Sam followed and was introduced to the cook, one Cady Betts, a tall, fair-complexioned French-Canadian whom the boys, as Sam discovered later, called "Kitty-Bett."

"Cady," said Mr. Gifford, "we're starved. Got anything to eat?"

The cook, who had been stocking the shelves with the supplies which had reached camp a little while before, smiled doubtfully.

"There is nothing cook," he said in his careful English, "but there is crackers and cheeses. Maybe you like them?"

Mr. Gifford declared that he did and, assisted moderately by Sam, consumed a large quantity of each, sitting on the kitchen table and chatting the while with "Kitty-Bett." The latter, Sam learned by listening, came from Michigan and in winter cooked for a big lumber company. He had a pair of the mildest, softest blue eyes Sam had ever seen in a man, and a pleasant smile, but one had only to watch him handle the cans and bags and jugs for a minute to see that he was as deft and quick as he was amiable. Presently Mr. Gif-

ford conducted Sam back through the dining-hall again, pointing out the mail box which hung just inside the doorway. All the doors at the camp were double and swung outward, and, as Sam found in the course of time, were seldom ever closed. Eating in the dining-hall was much like eating out of doors, for, besides the big doorway and a shuttered opening at the front, the two sides of the building from three feet above the floor to the eaves opened out and up, admitting light and air and, it must be confessed, not a few flies!

There was an ice-house behind the kitchen, with a storage space in front for meats and eggs and milk and vegetables, a place whose temperature was most grateful after the warmth outside. From there they walked down to the landing. Here lay quite a flotilla of row-boats and canoes, which a tow-headed youth named Jerry—if he had another name Sam never learned it—was engaged in painting and varnishing. Jerry was a sort of general factotum; carried the mail across the lake once a day in the little naphtha launch, which had not yet been slid out of the small boat-house nearby, washed dishes after meals,

pared potatoes, ran errands, and performed a dozen other duties. Mr. Gifford shook hands with Jerry and formally presented Sam. Jerry observed, with a shy smile, that he was "pleased to meet you, sir."

On the float, which was quite large, there was a springboard and a slide; also a covered box which held oars and oar-locks and canoe paddles, and had a life-belt hung at one end. There was not much of a beach there, for shore and lake met sharply. There was, however, Mr. Gifford explained, a fairly good stretch of sand further along, near the ball-field, which the older boys were allowed to go in from occasionally.

"About the first thing a boy has to do when he gets here," said Mr. Gifford, "is learn to swim. We put them all into the water twice a day, and those who want to may duck before breakfast. It generally takes only about a month to get the most backward youngsters to a point where they can keep afloat. They usually do their best to learn quickly because we don't allow them in the boats until they have; and it seems to be every boy's ambition to spend half his life in a canoe! I suppose you can manage a boat, Craig?"

"I can row a little; not very well, I guess. I've never been in a canoe, though."

"We'll have to remedy that. It won't take you long to learn. Well, I guess we've seen about all there is. What do you think of the place?"

"It's very—interesting," replied Sam. "I never was at a camp before."

"Really?" Mr. Gifford was silent for a minute or two while they walked back toward the dormitories. Then: "If you don't mind my asking, Craig, how old are you?" he inquired.

Sam told him and he nodded. "You look older than that," he said. "Better let the boys think you are older. They'll mind you better, I guess. You haven't met Haskins and Brown yet, have you? Let's find them."

They were with Mr. Langham in the little partitioned-off room at the front of The Wigwam, which the Director used both as office and bedroom. Mr. Haskins was, next to the Director, the oldest of the five who, with the arrival of Mr. Gifford and Sam, crowded the small office to its capacity. He was rather serious-looking, wore thick-lensed glasses and was slightly bald. He was an instructor at Burton College, which insti-

tution was well represented at The Wigwam, since Mr. Langham, too, was a member of the Burton faculty and Mr. Gifford was a post-graduate student there. Young Brown, a merry-faced boy of twenty, and Sam were the only ones not connected with Burton. Steve Brown was a sophomore at Western Reserve, and, like Sam, was a newcomer at the camp. After introductions were over Mr. Langham went over the daily schedule with the others—Sam found that his official title was junior councillor—and explained their duties. It seemed to Sam that The Wigwam was to be a very busy place and that time was not at all likely to hang heavily on his hands!

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BLANKET THAT RAN AWAY

Two days later The Wigwam was running according to schedule. The rising bugle sounded at seven and breakfast was at half-past. From the time breakfast was over until nine there was work of some sort for all hands. Beds had to be made, dormitories swept and put in order, grounds "policed," lamps filled, wood piled for the evening's "camp-fire" and numerous other duties attended to. From nine to eleven the boys did as they liked. A few were being coached in studies by Mr. Haskins and Mr. Gifford, and such work came in the forenoon. Then, too, Steve Brown conducted a class in photography which was well patronised, and once a week Mr. Langham took those who wanted to go for a walk through the woods or along the lake for Nature Study. At eleven there was what the boys called "soak." Wearing bathing trunks, the boys lined

up on the edge of the float and at the word from one of the councillors plunged into the water. Those who could not swim did their "plunging" from the sides of the float where the water was only a couple of feet deep. "Soak" lasted the better part of an hour and all the councillors were on hand in bathing suits to give instruction and prevent accidents. It was the duty of one to sit in a row-boat a little ways off shore and go to the assistance of any bather in difficulties. In fine weather that morning bath was the most enjoyable hour of the day. There were thirty-eight boys at the camp, and when they all got to splashing around and skylarking there was much fun and merriment. Woe to any of them who stood unguardedly near the edge of the float, for someone was certain to sneak up behind and then there'd be a howl and a splash and a chorus of laughter as the victim came thrashing to the surface. And, of course, there were always upsets on the springboard, and some boy was forever discovering a new and ridiculous manner of going down the slide. The councillors interfered very little, and, although real hazing was put down with a firm hand, the youngsters had to stand a good

deal of ungentle handling which did them no harm and speedily taught them confidence.

Sam quickly proved himself the best swimmer at camp and to him was delegated the education of the more advanced pupils, a task which he thoroughly enjoyed and went into heart and soul. There were some eight or ten older boys who showed real ability, and one, Tom Crossbush, a youth of nearly sixteen years, who, before the summer was over, learned to duplicate nearly every feat of Sam's, whether of diving or swimming.

Dinner was at half-past twelve, and, following it, came thirty minutes of siesta when every occupant of the camp, barring Kitty-Bett and Jerry, the chore-boy, was required to lie on his bed and keep absolutely quiet. The boys corrupted the word to "sister" and, most of them, thoroughly disliked that period. At two o'clock came recreation until four-thirty. There were two fairly good tennis courts and a ball-field about a quarter of a mile from camp. There, too, were set up standards for jumping and vaulting, and there was a ring for shot-putting and a stretch of fairly smooth turf used for sprinting. The boys were

all required to take up some form of athletic endeavour and those two hours and a half from two to four-thirty constituted the busiest period of the day for Mr. Gifford, Steve Brown, and Sam. Steve instructed in tennis—he was a good player—and helped at anything else he could. Mr. Gifford presided over track and field athletics and Sam was given entire charge of baseball. With very few exceptions all the boys played ball or tried to. Three nines were formed, the members drawn by lot by Mr. Gifford, Steve, and Sam, each of whom acted as manager for his aggregation. Captains were then chosen and practice began. Regular games were played twice a week, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and by the end of a fortnight the keenest rivalry had developed and they were having some exciting, if not very scientific contests.

The afternoon bathe, or "plunge," as it was called, came at half-past four and was over at five. Supper was at five-thirty. The camp-fire was lighted at eight and boys and councillors gathered about it to talk over together the day's happenings, make plans for the morrow and tell stories, sing songs and, finally, say prayers, and retire to the dormitories at nine. At ten o'clock

the big lights were put out and after that quiet was supposed to prevail. Sometimes it didn't, however, for all sorts of jokes were played in the darkness and quite frequently the councillors, at the end of the hall, would hear stealthy footsteps, muffled laughter, the sound of struggles and, sometimes, the crash of a cot whose wooden legs had been surreptitiously reversed beforehand and now deftly folded up underneath by the aid of a cord pulled, perhaps, from far down the hall. Sam was surprised to find that these larks were seldom interfered with by Mr. Gifford. If too much "rough-house" resulted the latter sent a cautioning, "That will do, fellows! Cut it out now!" travelling through the darkness and the usual result was instant quiet. "All the fun you like so long as it's harmless" was the rule at The Wigwam.

Being a newcomer, Sam had to undergo some initiating. The second night he was there, after he had settled himself comfortably on his straw mattress and was drowsily watching the stars through the window at the foot of his cot, something at once startling and mysterious occurred. If Sam had been more experienced with boys he

would have become suspicious at the almost instant silence which prevailed that night after "lights." Almost before the boys had exchanged "good night" with the councillors, unmistakable evidences of healthy slumber came from various quarters. Something else that might have warned Sam was the prompt dousing of his reading-light by Mr. Gifford. The previous night that gentleman had burned his lamp until almost midnight, as Sam, the unaccustomed surroundings and the strange bed keeping him wakeful, well knew. But to-night Mr. Gifford had blown out his lamp only a minute or so after ten.

Sam was just on the verge of sinking off into slumber when the blanket—there were no sheets at The Wigwam—suddenly slid off to the floor. Sleepily, he reached down and felt for it, but failed to get hold of it. Wider awake now, he groped again but with no success. There was enough light from the open doorway and the windows to show him the blanket lying under the next cot. Blinking, he put his legs out of bed and reached for it. It wasn't there! He stared in amazement. He stooped and peered under the cot. The blanket was now between it and the next

one. Still too bemused by sleep to suspect a trick, he got up and walked around to the next aisle. The snoring had quite ceased, but Sam failed to notice the fact. Again he leaned down to pick up the blanket and again it wasn't there!

He realised then he was the victim of a practical joke, but the mechanism still puzzled him. Up and down the dormitory not a figure moved. Intense silence prevailed. With the breeze playing about his bare legs, Sam stood in the passage and deliberated. Finally a slow smile spread over his face and the next instant he had whisked the blanket from the nearest cot and was walking sedately back to his bed! And at that moment shouts went up from all over the dormitory and every boy was sitting up in his cot, wide awake and swaying with laughter. And, as Sam lay down again and drew his stolen blanket over him, he was surprised to hear Mr. Gifford's laughter mingling heartily with the rest!

The boy whose bed-clothing Sam had taken in reprisal was now dodging from one aisle to the next in wild pursuit of the elusive blanket which, pulled at the end of a cord from the farther end of the hall, led him a merry chase. Meanwhile

the boys were calling demurely to Sam: "Cold night, Mr. Craig!" "Anything I can do, sir?" "That was a mean trick, Mr. Craig!" And then Mr. Gifford's voice from across the passage: "We all have to take it, Craig! All right now?"

"Yes, thanks," replied Sam. "Anyone who gets this will have to fight for it!"

At which there was more laughter and some applause and at last the dormitory really settled down to slumber and the snores that Sam heard were not feigned. Sam chuckled once or twice before he too dropped off to sleep.

A day or so later he was given an involuntary bath. He was standing on the end of the landing watching Horace Chase try to do the Australian crawl-stroke, when there was a sudden push from behind and in he went, heels over head, and for a moment he and young Chase were inextricably mixed up, for he had landed squarely on that youth. When he came to the surface, sputtering and blinking, he supposed that it had been an accident, but the grinning faces of the boys on the landing told a different tale, as did the smile that played over the countenance of Mr. Haskins, who was on duty in the row-boat. Then Sam

grinned too, pulled himself quickly to the landing, and charged the miscreants. Over they went, with shouts and squeals, striking the water every which way and for the next few minutes giving Sam a wide berth. His good-natured acceptance of their jokes won their approval, and, although some few boys at first rather resented being under the authority of a fellow who was only a year or two older than they were, Sam soon found that he had won his place.

Every forenoon at ten o'clock the councillors met in Mr. Langham's little office and made their reports and talked over with the Chief all matters concerning the conduct of the camp. Now and then, at first very infrequently, it was necessary to discipline some too-spirited youth. But on the whole the boys were well-behaved and little punishment had to be meted out. Usually the council ended in a jovial give-and-take in which even the Chief had to accept his share of joking. Sam found himself a bit too slow at repartee to take much part in these exchanges of banter, but he enjoyed them in his quiet way and was perhaps better liked because he bore himself modestly.

He had plenty to keep him busy, but all the

tasks were more like play than work, and the fact that he was out of doors practically every moment of each day, and might as well have been outdoors at night as far as fresh air was concerned, made his duties easy, kept him fit and gave him a most voracious appetite of which he was inclined to be ashamed until he saw that it was no more remarkable than Steve Brown's or Mr. Gifford's, or, for that matter, some of the boys themselves! Things certainly tasted good, too. The food was plain but plentiful, and well-cooked. Kitty-Bett disdained coal, and the meats had a wonderful wood-fire flavour that appealed to appetites grown out-o'-doors. Blueberries were in season and wild raspberries were to be had for the picking. Fresh vegetables were brought every day from a neighbouring farm. There was hot meat at noon—steak or roasts—and cold meat for supper. The eggs were freshly-laid, and, whether boiled or made into one of Kitty-Bett's inimitable omelets, were delicious. And as for Kitty-Bett's pies and doughnuts and griddle-cakes! Well, words would have quite failed Sam there! The doughnuts—Kitty-Bett called them "fried-cakes"—were in such demand that he had

to fry a batch almost every day. Between meals there was always a bowl of them on one of the tables in dining-hall, and there was no one to see whether you took one or a half-dozen.

Fortunately, for a whole two weeks the weather was fair; pretty hot in the middle of the day, but cool enough at night to make at least one thickness of blanket acceptable. Life at The Wigwam was very pleasant, and to this effect Sam wrote home to his mother and sister, and, later, to Tom Pollock. Sam felt very grateful to Tom for having told him of the situation, and said so in the letter which he penned one Sunday afternoon, seated under the trees by the shore of the lake. Among other things, Sam wrote: "You were right about the railway fare. Mr. Langham asked me how much it was and he is going to pay it back to me at the end of the month. I told him he needn't, but he said it was the custom and everybody got his travelling expenses, even Kitty-Bett, who is the cook and a wonder. I just wish, Tom, you could taste some of his blueberry pie. The shirts you sold me are fine, but I haven't worn the sweater yet. The weather has been very warm and no rain yet. Have you started the

nine again? Please write and tell me the news."

Tom replied very promptly and told all the happenings. The Blues were getting together again and Buster Healey was to catch for them. Sid was to play first base. They hadn't arranged for many games yet, but Lynton had promised to play them a week from next Saturday. Tom was glad Sam liked the camp, and he and Sid meant to run up some time in August and see it.

Meanwhile Sam learned to handle a pair of oars with skill and a canoe paddle less dexterously. There were fish in the lake and Sam was a devoted disciple of Walton. His usual companion on his fishing trips was Tom Crossbush. Tom pretended to be enthusiastic about the sport, but I think his liking for Sam was the real reason for his participation in the excursions down the lake. At all events, his enthusiasm soon wore off after his line was dropped and most of the fish that were caught came up on Sam's hook. Once or twice Steve Brown went along, but Steve didn't pretend to know much about the gentle art and as often as not sat for long stretches with, as he said, "nothing on his hook but water." Nevertheless,

it was Steve who, later on in August, by some miracle hauled in the biggest black bass in the history of the camp. It weighed just four pounds and six ounces and Steve was so delighted that he sent it away to be mounted. Mr. Langham, who, could he have done so, would have been on the lake every day holding a bass rod, threw up his hands in disgust when he saw Steve's capture. "Beginner's luck!" he grumbled. "I've fished in that lake twenty times and never got better than a two-pounder! What bait did you have?"

"Just a worm, sir," answered Steve innocently.

"A worm! You mean an angle-worm?" sputtered the Chief.

Steve assented, and Sam, laughing, said: "He won't use helgamites, Chief. He says they're too ugly!"

"A garden worm!" exclaimed Mr. Langham. "Great jumping Jupiter! Don't you know you don't catch bass with angle-worms, you ignoramus?"

"Sorry," replied Steve, grinning. "I caught this one that way, though."

"I wouldn't boast of it, then," grunted the Chief. "You insulted the fish's intelligence!

Four pounds and six ounces!'' Mr. Langham subsided, shaking his head and viewing the fish enviously.

Bass didn't always bite, however, and perch were the usual catch. But four or five fair-sized perch make a palatable addition to the supper or breakfast menu, and the Chief's table, at the lower end of which Sam had his place, was not infrequently graced with it.

Once every week there was a picnic, and on those occasions Sam's prowess with hook and line was in demand. Sad to relate, however, it was at such times that his luck failed him, and very seldom did the picnickers' vision of crisply fried perch materialise. That fact never spoiled the fun, though, and the weekly picnic was a favourite event. The boys piled into row-boats and canoes, after the small launch had been filled, and, at the end of tow-lines, were taken up or down or across Indian Lake to one of the numerous sites. Fellows who could be thoroughly trusted in canoes were allowed to paddle, but most of them floated along in the wake of the little launch which, with half a dozen boats holding her back, barely managed to make six miles an hour. Sam suspected that one

reason picnics were so popular was because there was no "sister" on such days. To be sure, after luncheon was eaten, a luncheon skilfully prepared by Kitty-Bett, the boys were supposed to lie down and keep quiet for the usual half-hour, but the rule was not rigidly enforced and the boys found many ways of amusing themselves without actually moving around. By half-past two they were generally back at the playing-field, for even a picnic doesn't take the place of a ball game!

Sam's team was called the Mascots, Mr. Gifford's the Indians, and Steve Brown's the Brownies. The councillors sometimes played, but more often confined themselves to coaching. If they did take a hand in a game they went into the outfield so that the boys might play in the coveted infield positions. Mr. Gifford's team was showing up best at the end of the first fortnight and had won two games. Sam's charges had won one and lost one and the Brownies had lost both of their contests. In fairness to the last named nines, though, it should be explained that the Indians were fortunate in the possession of the only first-class pitcher in camp, one George Porter, a slight, wiry chap of fifteen who had a

good curve and a fast straight ball and could mix them up cunningly. Even Sam, who was considered a very dependable batsman back in Amesville, had more than once failed to hit young Porter safely. Aside from pitchers, however, the three teams were evenly matched and when, the Saturday following the receipt of Tom Pollock's letter, the Mascots and the Indians met for their third game, the entire camp was moved to a high pitch of excitement.

## CHAPTER V

### A SLIDE TO THE PLATE

The minute "sister" was over the boys were hurrying toward the playing-field, followed more leisurely by Sam and Mr. Gifford and Steve Brown, who was to umpire the contest. The way led through the woods for nearly a quarter of a mile, over a well-worn path that now skirted the lake, and now turned inland to cross a brook by a log bridge. Then it climbed up-hill through a plantation of young maples, hugged the face of a limestone boulder and dipped again to the edge of the field. The whole camp turned out, if we omit Mr. Langham, Kitty-Bett, and Jerry; and Mr. Langham arrived later. Sam and Mr. Gifford set their teams to warming up and the fellows who were to play the parts of spectators arranged themselves along the base-lines. It was fairly hot this afternoon and scarcely a ripple stirred the surface of the lake. The Indians won the toss and

went into the field and Steve Brown called: "Play ball!"

George Porter disposed of the first three Mascots handily. Tom Crossbush, who led the batting list, was the only one of the trio to connect with the ball and his effort only resulted in an easy out at first. Dick Barry, who pitched for Sam's nine, was a chunky, stub-nosed youth of fourteen with very little science but a whole big lot of assurance. Ned Welch caught him, and Ned, a year older, was a steady chap behind the plate and handled Dick cleverly. But to-day, as usual, Dick was touched up pretty frequently. Ed Thursby began the fun for Mr. Gifford's tribe with a fly that Dan Peterson, in left field, misjudged miserably. Ed got to second and the Indians' third baseman bunted him to third and reached first himself when Dick Barry threw low to Crossbush, who played the initial sack. The next man fanned and Dick's friends in the audience shouted approval. But Sawyer, the Indian first baseman, found something he liked and slammed a hit between second and short and Thursby came home with the first tally. Another hit a minute later scored a second run and then a pop fly descended into Dick's glove

and made the second out and before the runner on third could score a second strike-out was secured by Dick.

The game ran along at two to nothing until the first of the third. Then the Mascots managed to get a run across by a combination of a hit, a sacrifice fly, and an error by the Indians' third baseman. But the Indians came back in their half with a slugging fest and put two more tallies across. Neither team was able to do anything in the fourth or fifth. George Porter ran his strike-out total up to seven and Dick Barry, while he only fooled one more Indian, somehow managed to escape punishment. Steve Brown made a decision at first that dissatisfied the Mascots, when Dick suddenly shot the ball across to Tom Crossbush and apparently nailed Ned Welch a foot off the bag. But the umpire didn't see it that way and, anyhow, the decision made no difference in the outcome.

In the first of the sixth inning Sam's team started off with a rush. Young Fairchild dribbled a weak bunt along third-base line and the throw to first went wild. The runner scurried to second and then, coached frantically to go on, made an

apparently hopeless attempt to reach third. But another wild heave saved him. Third baseman blocked the ball, but not in time to make the out, and Terry Fairchild, immensely proud of his feat, sat on the bag and tried to recover his breath and made derisive remarks to the baseman. Sam instructed the next batter, Pete Simpson, to try to bunt, hoping that the ball would be played to the plate and that Pete would get his base. Naturally, the runner on third was not supposed to go home unless the way was clear, for there were no outs.

Pete had a strike and two balls called on him before he found anything he thought he could use to advantage. Then he struck loosely against a high ball and by good luck sent it rolling along the first-base path. Pete raced for first and Pitcher Porter raced for the ball. And, contrary to instructions from the third-base coach, young Fairchild, doubtless desiring to still further glorify himself, sprinted for home. He had about one chance in twenty of reaching it safely, for Porter scooped up the ball on the run, turned swiftly, and threw to the plate. And Jimmy Benson, astride the platter, caught it waist-high, and

everything should have been lovely for the Indians. But Terry Fairchild, sprawling on his back, with both legs kicking in the air, arrived a fraction of a second after the ball and, since Benson was in the way, Terry just naturally collided with him, knocked his feet from under him, and went by. Unfortunately, the shock was so disturbing to the catcher that he inadvertently loosed his hold on the ball and the ball followed Terry into the dust. And Steve Brown, who had already motioned the runner out, reversed his decision, and Peter Simpson slid to second.

Jimmy Benson was disgruntled, even angry, and said unkind things to Terry. But Terry, picking himself up with a swagger and patting the dust from his scant costume, only grinned exasperatingly and walked to the bench, there to be hilariously patted and hugged by his team-mates. When, however, he glanced toward Sam, expecting praise, he got a surprise.

"Don't do that again, Fairchild," said the junior councillor severely. "Mind what the coach tells you. You made it, but you had no business making it, and if Benson hadn't dropped the ball you'd have looked pretty cheap. You take

your orders from the coach, Fairchild, after this."

Terry, chastened in spirit, subsided amidst the smiles of the others as Jones faced the Indian pitcher. Porter was in the air now, and, although Mr. Gifford called encouragement and Benson counselled him to take his time and "put them over," he slammed the ball in vindictively and Jones drew a pass. Porter steadied down then, but the team, especially the infield, was unsettled, and, after Welch, with two strikes against him, hit squarely to first baseman and made the first out, Simpson and Jones tried a double steal and got away with it, the Indian shortstop dropping the throw from the plate. Cheers and jeers rewarded this event. Benson tried to steady the team as Dick Barry went to bat.

"Never mind that, fellows!" called Jimmy. "Here's an easy one! Strike him out, George! Three will do it! Put 'em right over the middle, he couldn't hit a basket-ball!"

Possibly Dick couldn't have hit a basket-ball, but he did manage to connect with one of Porter's curves and send it just over second baseman's head. When the ball was back in the pitcher's

hands two more runs had crossed the plate, Dick was safe at first, and the score was a tie at four runs each. But the Mascots were not through even then. Sam, realising that now was the time to win, if ever, urged his fellows to their best endeavours. Tom Crossbush, however, over-anxious for a hit, struck at everything and, after fouling off two good ones, bit at a wide curve, and retired morosely to the bench.

"Two gone!" announced the coaches. "Run on anything, Dick!"

So Dick took a chance and scuttled for second and beat the ball by several feet. Peterson waited while Porter worked a strike and two balls on him. Then he met the next offering fairly and squarely for the longest hit of the game, and sent it far into centre field, at least a yard over Meldrum's head, and while that youth scampered back for it, raced desperately around the bases in an attempt to stretch a three-bagger into a home run. Fortunately, though, he was held up at third, to score the sixth tally a minute later when Groom's easy infield hit got by Thursby at second. Peterson reached the plate on his stomach, the merest fraction of an instant ahead of the ball. Then

White hit a swift one to Thursby, and that youth, retrieving his previous error, made a flying one-hand catch for the third out.

But six to four looked good to the Mascots and they trotted into the field with the determination to hold their advantage. And they did, for the rest of the sixth at least. For Dick Barry, summoning all the craft he knew, and ably seconded by Ned Welch, disposed of the next two Indians without trouble. The third banged out a two-bagger into right, and subsequently stole third when Welch let a delivery get past him, but he got no further that inning, for the next batsman was an easy out, second baseman to first.

There was no scoring in either half of the seventh, although the Indians had two men on bases at one time, with only one out. What luck there was broke for the Mascots; and the first double-play of the game, participated in by Groom and Crossbush, put an end to the inning. In the eighth the Mascots came near to scoring when Peterson reached third on a base hit and a wild throw to second and tried to score on White's grounder to shortstop. At that the decision at the plate was close and might have gone either way.

In their half the Indians set to work with vim and lighted on Dick Barry hard. Codman hit safely, Benson got his base on balls, Porter struck out, Thursby sacrificed, and Nettleton, with only one gone, filled the bases by a pop fly to Dick, which that overeager youth dropped. Things looked desperate then for Sam's charges, but a minute later Sawyer had fouled out to third baseman and the Mascots and their allies breathed freer. They were not to emerge unscathed, however, for Meldrum hit a bounder that just tipped Dick's upstretched fingers and was finally fielded by Groom too late to throw to the plate or to first, and the Indians scored their fifth run. Then, after missing the plate three times out of four, and putting himself in a hole, Dick made a sudden throw to second and, after a wildly exciting moment, the runner was caught between bases.

Simpson opened the ninth for the Mascots with a bunt that trickled down the first-base line and threatened every instant to roll out, but never did, much to the disgust of Porter and Benson, who hovered anxiously over it. Had Porter fielded it at once he could have made the assist, but he left the decision with the ball and the ball fooled

him. Then Jones sacrificed Peterson to second, Welch struck out, Barry lifted a fly to left field that was an easy catch and, with two down and a runner on second, the inning looked about over. But Tom Crossbush drew a pass and stole second on the first pitch, while Simpson went to third, and then Dan Peterson scored Simpson, with a hit over second base.

The Mascots leaped and shrieked with delight, and while the Indians were still wondering what had happened, and while George Porter was winding up to send his first offering to Billy White, Crossbush, who was dancing back and forth a dozen feet from third, suddenly broke for the plate. Shouts of warning, shrieks of excitement! Porter momentarily faltering as he pitched! Crossbush sliding feet foremost for the platter! Benson leaping far to the right in a despairing effort to get the ball! Peterson rounding second like a runaway colt! And then, while the brown dust billowed, Steve Brown announcing, "Safe!"

Eight to five then, and nothing to it but the Mascots! Shouting and dancing and pandemonium along the lines! And, finally, White striking

out and a deep breath of relief from the Indians and their supporters.

And there practically ended the game, for the Indians failed to put over a single tally in their half of the final inning, and ten minutes later the camp was thronging homeward, the Mascots very cocky and talkative, and the Indians confiding to their friends what they would do the next time!

## CHAPTER VI

### THE TILTING MATCH

The afternoon's game was talked over by all hands that evening at camp-fire. Once or twice the argument grew warm, but it never passed the bounds of good-nature. Mr. Gifford criticised the playing, as did Sam and Steve Brown, pointing out mistakes and making helpful suggestions. Mr. Gifford had played baseball all during his college course and knew the game well. Sam, with less experience, was chary of criticism until urged to it by the others. When he did give his opinion, however, it was worth hearing, for he spoke of several things which had seemingly evaded Mr. Gifford's eyes.

"I noticed," said Sam, "that neither of the outfields to-day studied the batsman as they should. They played in the same positions for a right-handed batter as for a left. Of course, it's up to the captain or the pitcher to see the outfield as well as the infield is where it should be, but every

outfielder ought to realise that a right-handed batter is going to hit more to the left than a left-handed batter, and he ought to move over accordingly. The infield the same way, only, of course, the infield needn't change position so much. On the Mascots, White stood too far back for most batsmen. He was all right for a long hit to centre, but he would have lost two out of three hits into short centre. The—the ideal position for any fielder is where he can run in quickly for short flies and grounders and run out easily for long ones. Of course no outfielder can station himself where he is going to be able to reach every ball. If he gets so far back that he can handle three-baggers and homers he is going to miss short hits. But you want to remember that it is a heap easier to run in for a ball than it is to run out, because when you're running in you can judge the ball as you go, and when you're running out you have got to make up your mind about where the ball is coming down and then turn your back and scoot. The only way to judge the ball is to look over your shoulder, and that isn't easy. So the best thing for an outfielder to do is to play his position about two-thirds back. That is, leave two-thirds of his

territory in front of him and one-third behind him. And an outfielder's territory begins at a point where it's impossible for an infielder to reach a fly and extends to the farthest limits of a home run. If your infielders are smart at running back and getting flies, your territory is—is shortened just so much, and you can play further out than you can if your basemen and shortstop are weak on hits outside the diamond. I don't know that I've explained this very clearly."

"I think you have," said Mr. Langham. "Don't you, fellows?"

There was a chorus of assent, and Sam continued.

"Another thing was that Peterson played too far to the right in left field. That fly of Thursby's would have been an out if Peterson had been in position for it. Thursby bats right-handed and Peterson was playing as though for a left-hander. Peterson made a fine try for it, but he had to cover too much ground. So, you see, an outfielder has got to divide his territory in two ways, lengthwise and crosswise. Of course, on the big teams it's customary for the catcher, or sometimes the pitcher, to signal to the infield what the delivery

is to be and the infielders, usually second baseman or shortstop, let the outfielders know. Because a certain kind of a ball, if it is hit, is pretty sure to go to a certain part of the field, as you all know."

"That's something I didn't know," laughed the Chief. "Suppose you explain for my benefit, Craig."

"Well, sir, of course I don't mean that a certain ball always goes to a certain place when hit, but it generally does. For instance, if there's a right-handed batter up and the pitcher sends him a slow ball, either in the groove or with an out-curve, that ball is usually hit before it quite reaches the plate, because the batter doesn't judge the speed of it in time to wait for it, and that hit goes into third-base territory or beyond. The same way, if the pitcher sends in a fast ball, straight or with an out-curve, the batter will hit late or after the ball has passed the centre of the plate and it will go toward first base or right field. A ball of ordinary speed, like a straight drop, usually goes toward second base. Of course, some batters can meet a slow ball just right and then these—these probabilities are upset. But by the—the law of averages, a slow ball to a right-hander

goes to left field and a fast ball to right. And so, if the fielders know what the pitcher is going to pitch they can either shift their positions or, anyhow, be prepared."

"Doesn't shifting position give the thing away?" asked Steve Brown.

"I think it does," Sam agreed. "But for all that some of the big teams do it. I don't think, though, that it's necessary. If you're playing in the outfield, say, and you get the signal that the hit is coming to your right, that's enough. You're ready to move that way the instant the ball goes to the batter."

"That's what I suppose you call inside baseball," commented Mr. Langham. "It is very interesting. You must have played a good deal of baseball, Craig, to know so much about it."

"I've played several years, sir," replied Sam, a bit embarrassed. "I've always caught, though, and you have a better chance to study the game from behind the bat than from anywhere else on the field, I guess. I—I didn't mean to talk so much, though, when I started out."

"I don't think you need apologise. I think we've all been very much interested. And I dare

say I'm not the only one who has learned something. How about it, fellows?''

Hearty agreement greeted this, and George Meldrum said: ''I think it would be fine if Mr. Craig would tell us something like that every evening. I guess all us fellows want to know about baseball; I mean stuff like he's told us to-night. I know I do.''

''That's so,'' agreed Ned Welch. ''How about another lecture to-morrow, Mr. Craig?''

''I'm afraid that's what it sounded like, a lecture,'' said Sam ruefully.

''No, I didn't mean it that way,'' replied Ned earnestly. ''We liked it. I always thought that stuff about a certain kind of a ball going to a certain part of the field was just—just made up by men who write about baseball. I didn't think anyone could really know beforehand, sir.''

''Let's try it the next time we play,'' said Mr. Gifford, ''and see how it works out. Anyway, what Mr. Craig has said about shifting positions according to the batter is excellent advice. And we'll see if we can't persuade him to tell us some more to-morrow night, fellows. Who plays next Wednesday, by the way?''

"Your team and the Brownies," answered someone. And a discussion of the probable outcome of that contest followed and almost before anyone knew it nine o'clock had arrived.

Camp-fire was always a pleasant hour. The fire was built each morning on a circular floor of stones some eighty feet up the hill from The Tepee and just at the edge of the forest. About it each night the councillors and boys gathered. At eight the fire was lighted and in its cheery glare the day's events were discussed, stories were told, songs were sung, and plans for the morrow laid. Several of the boys played instruments. When the entire orchestra was assembled there were three mandolins, two banjos, and a violin to make music. None of the performers save perhaps Horace Chase was very talented, but all made up for lack of skill by their willingness to entertain. Young Chase, who played the violin, was of different calibre, and when he took his instrument out of its case the audience was sure of a real treat.

Sam never forgot those nights when, stretched out on the pine-needles, or, if the evening was damp, on a blanket from his cot, he lay in the mellow firelight and listened to Horace Chase

play "Annie Laurie" or "Home, Sweet Home." He had merrier tunes, but those two seemed to be the choice of the boys. Or perhaps the mandolins and banjos would be strumming together, or fairly near together, some rag-time tune. Or perhaps the fellows would be singing such songs as "Solomon Levi" or "Boola" or some more recent favourite. Often a big white moon swam overhead or played hide-and-seek amongst the branches of the dark trees, and the lake, below them, showed a wonderful silvery path to the farthest shore. They were very pleasant, those camp-fire hours; fragrant with the night odours of trees and grass and pungent pine-needles, musical with the lap of the water against the shore and the whisper of the breeze amidst the trees and the sleepy chirp of unseen birds; blessed, too, with a fine atmosphere of good-comradeship; nights to be long remembered.

Sam did continue his baseball talks, although he didn't give one every evening, and the boys liked them and always demanded more. Not all of Sam's knowledge had been gained at first-hand, you may be sure. Much of it he had read or been told, but all of it he had seen put to the test.

And, before the summer was over, much of it was put to the test again, for the fellows profited by what they heard and, as far as it was possible in the circumstances, followed Sam's advice.

Some amusing incidents developed. As, on the Wednesday following Sam's first talk, when, in the game between the Indians and Brownies, Jimmy Benson signalled for a fast ball and the fielders, getting the signal from Jimmy, moved to the left, and the batter lined a hot one six feet inside of third base, and there was no one there to even knock it down! But the incident didn't prove Sam's theory at fault, since Jimmy and Porter both acknowledged afterwards that the ball had not been what the signal called for, but a slow out-shoot. It had been a case of mixed signals between catcher and pitcher. Again, in a later contest between the same teams, the Brownies, who had fixed up a most elaborate system of signals, had a runner on third and one on second. With two gone, a double steal was called for. The boy on second got the signal, but the runner on third was evidently day-dreaming, and a moment later the surprising sight of two runners each claiming third base was in evidence! That bungle

probably cost the Brownies the game and for some time a signal code was viewed by them with disfavour.

But baseball was not the only interest at The Wigwam. The first week in August there was an afternoon of water sports that provided lots of fun and not a little excitement. By that time many of the beginners had attained to quite a degree of proficiency, and in the forty-yard swimming race more than twenty younger boys lined up and struggled gallantly for the honours. What a splashing and gurgling and general rumpus there was! Mr. Langham laughingly said that it reminded him of a swarm of minnows trying to get away from a pickerel!

Harry Codman, a sturdy thirteen-year-old youth, won by a scant yard over Billy White, and after that most of the others floundered across the finish in a bunch and none of the judges could have told who was entitled to third place. A twelve-year-old chap named Walters very nearly made a tragedy of the event. Walters tired himself so in the first dash that when, halfway through the race, one of the other swimmers accidentally kicked him in the stomach, Walters lost all in-

terest in the race and tried hard to drown in three feet of water. It was Sam who saw what had happened and dropped from the landing and pulled a much-exhausted and water-logged youth to dry land. The programme was halted while young Walters restored some of the water he had swallowed.

There were many entries for the tilting tournament. The contestants occupied canoes and were armed with ten-foot poles. The poles held a pad at one end and the bows of the canoes were likewise protected. The boys "had at" each other most briskly until some fortunate thrust deposited one or other of the tilters either in the bottom of his canoe or in the water. Joe Groom emerged triumphant from three encounters and finally met George Porter in the final bout. Cheered by the onlookers, the boys approached each other warily. Each canoe was paddled by a partner in the stern, Ned Welch for Joe and Ralph Murdock for George. Naturally, a good deal depended on the cleverness of the paddler in manœuvring the canoe and each of the operators was well skilled. Joe and George, poles ready, stood in the bows while the craft neared each other cautiously and the audience

laughed and jeered. Then Ned Welch dug his paddle and his canoe shot forward.

But George and his mate were ready. Their craft sheered aside, avoiding the bow of the other, and George, thrusting low, almost won the event there and then. Fortunately for Joe, however, the padded pole glanced off his leg and he recovered his balance but not in time to retaliate. The canoes swept past each other, turned and again drew together. This time they met bows on and a fast and furious battle ensued. Once George went reeling backward and his canoe rocked dangerously, but steady work by Murdock avoided an upset. Ned Welch, pressing the advantage, pushed after the retreating craft, and Joe sought to get under the guard of his opponent. George, though, recovered finely and defended himself so well that in a moment he was again forcing the fighting and only a well-executed retreat by Ned saved Joe from defeat. Ned backed away quickly, turning almost in the length of the canoe, and before Murdock could solve his intention, had drawn parallel and slightly to the rear. Murdock paddled furiously and shot his craft ahead, but Ned was on his heels and the spectacle of the two war-

riors, each maintaining his equilibrium with difficulty, proceeding frantically out into the lake almost side by side brought bursts of laughter from the onlookers.

It was a stern chase for a minute and then Ned's muscles prevailed and Joe drew up within pole's length of his enemy. George, facing toward the stern of his rocking canoe, strove to beat down the thrust that Joe made. But Joe's aim was good and he put all his force into the delivery and the padded end of his pole caught George under one shoulder and fairly lifted him off his feet. Over he went, backward, still grasping his pole, and disappeared from sight, while a shout of applause and laughter arose from the landing and boats, a shout which redoubled an instant later when Joe, having lost his balance in the desperate thrust, staggered, tried to save himself, failed finally, and, dropping his weapon, plunged heels over head in the lake!

## CHAPTER VII

### SAM OFFERS A SUGGESTION

Dripping and grinning the two warriors were pulled into row-boats and taken ashore, where Mr. Gifford, referee of the tournament, announced the match a draw.

There was a senior diving contest, won by Tom Crossbush, and a junior contest for the younger youths. And there were several other swimming races of varying distances. And, finally, a special race of an eighth of a mile, more or less, between Sam and Steve Brown, in which Sam allowed his competitor something like fifty yards and beat him out handily.

There were no prizes given, but Steve Brown recorded the events and the names of the winners with a hot poker on a wooden panel and the panel was hung in The Wigwam.

The ball games went on twice each week and the Indians, thanks to George Porter's pitching, distanced their rivals without much trouble. It

was well into August before the Mascots again won a victory from Mr. Gifford's team, having meanwhile lost four more games to it. The Brownies were easy picking for both the other nines, and, in fact, won but two games all the season, defeating the Mascots once, 12 to 10, and the Indians, 7 to 4. In the latter game Porter was suffering, as he later acknowledged, from too many unripe apples, and his pitching was far from being up to his standard. Toward the middle of August there was a noticeable improvement in the work of all the teams. The fellows batted better, fielded better, and ran bases better, and, too, developed not a little team-play. Even the Brownies had their star performer, that same Ralph Murdock who had piloted George Porter through the tilting bouts. Murdock was a born first baseman and a fine batsman as well, and had his team-mates possessed half his ability the Brownies would have been a nine to fear.

The councillors usually played only in practice, but once or twice, by common agreement, they took part in a game. When they did the fielders were busy. Mr. Gifford was the slugging kind of a batter and in one game drove out three home

runs, a double, and a single in five times at bat. The Indians were playing the Brownies that day, and Steve Brown, while he did not succeed in rivalling Mr. Gifford's batting record, always managed to reach first and then showed what could be done by a smart base-runner. He stole second brazenly, using the fallaway slide to such purpose that it was a hopeless matter to try and stop him. Once on second, he had scarcely more difficulty reaching third and on two occasions he made barefaced steals to the plate. In one inning he reached first on a scratch hit and then stole home before the following batsman had been retired! The Indians soon got so that they only half-heartedly attempted to stay him in his delirious romps around the bases, only Mr. Gifford daring to dispute his progress. Mr. Gifford played in centre field and once, having come in almost to the base-line to field a short fly, he conceived the idea of catching Steve off third. Steve was enjoying a twelve-foot lead at the moment, doubtless considering his chance of getting home ahead of the ball. Mr. Gifford pegged suddenly to third baseman and that youth made a perfect catch. But, contrary to expectation, Steve didn't

scuttle back to safety at third. Instead, he dashed for the plate at top speed. Third baseman heaved the ball to catcher. Steve turned and doubled back. Catcher went after him along the base-line. By that time most of the infield had gathered about to help retire the annoying Mr. Brown and there was much shouting and confusion. But it was evidently not the first time that Steve had been caught between bases. He ran and ducked and doubled as coolly and craftily as if he quite enjoyed it, which he doubtless did. And at last, just when the shortstop, who had joined the fray, was on the point of tagging him, Steve spurted back to third, upsetting two players on the way and slid into the bag in safety.

Much applause then from the audience of non-combatants and from the bench where the Brownies were congregated. Much laughter, too, and not a little "ragging" of the Indians. Out near second Mr. Gifford shook a threatening fist at Steve as the latter arose and patted the dust from his flannel trousers. Disconsolately and a bit sheepishly, the Indians returned to their places. At the plate, Jimmy Benson stooped to pick up his mask. In the pitcher's box George Porter, ball

in hand, back to the plate, waited for the fielders to get in position. And at that psychological instant Steve Brown trotted home!

He didn't even hurry. There was a shout of alarm from the third baseman and Porter turned to see the councillor halfway to the plate. Porter raised his arm to throw, but there was Benson, intensely agitated but helpless, struggling with his mask. And so Steve crossed the home-plate at a slow lope and turned smilingly toward the bench. The ball reached the plate a moment later and rolled against the backstop. The Indians were not allowed to forget that incident for many days.

In another contest, when Sam was playing left field for his team and Mr. Gifford was with the Indians, there was a batting contest that was worth seeing. Sam was something of a heavy hitter himself, and he didn't find George Porter very difficult. Sam and Mr. Gifford, then, vied with each other and kept the opposing outfields very busy indeed. Mr. Gifford got no home runs that time, but he made a record of two doubles and three singles, and his doubles might have gone for triples if the Mascots' outfielders hadn't been playing well back. Sam got one three-bagger,

a double, and two singles, on the other occasion popping a foul to first baseman. In the matter of total bases the two councillors came off even, but it was claimed by the Mascots that Sam's triple had gained him the palm. As far as the game itself went, the Indians won it easily.

There came a rainy spell in the middle of the month, that made baseball out of the question for several days and the boys began to show signs of fidgeting. There wasn't much they could do to work off their surplus animation when it rained. Not that the rain kept many of them indoors, for it didn't; but knocking about in wet boats and canoes soon palled, tennis was impracticable, and there seemed to remain no outdoor amusement. By the fourth day the fellows had begun to get into mischief in sheer boredom and Mr. Langham realised that something must be done; that some outlet must be provided for the stored-up energy. The councillors talked it over in the office that morning. The rain still pelted down and the buildings were damp and cheerless in spite of the fires that flared all day in the big chimney-places. Sam, who had put on his raincoat and had his pockets bulging with bait-box and fishing tackle, hoped

the conference would soon be over, for he and Tom Crossbush were going down the lake after bass. As it turned out, however, there was to be no fishing for them to-day.

"I suppose," said Mr. Langham, "we couldn't get up any sort of an athletic meet, Brown?"

"No, sir; everything's flooded at the field. The pits are mud-holes."

"Well, we ought to get them busy at something, fellows. They'll be getting into trouble if we don't. I thought I detected a strong odour of cigarettes under the window yesterday."

Mr. Haskins nodded. "Three or four of the older boys were in the trunk cellar. I—er—I went down there, but failed to apprehend them."

The Chief tried not to smile. They all knew that Mr. Haskins had undoubtedly warned the boys of his approach and carefully waited until they had hidden all incriminating evidence before he had confronted them. Mr. Langham coughed and looked out the dripping window.

"We mustn't have smoking, Haskins," he said gravely.

"No, sir. If you'd like the names——"

"No, no," responded the Chief hurriedly. "If

there's no evidence—— What we've got to do is to get them busy so they won't get into any deviltry. Anyone got a suggestion?''

Apparently no one had. At least none spoke for a moment. Then Mr. Gifford said doubtfully: ''We might let them go over to the village for the afternoon, sir.''

The village lay across and down the lake some two miles, a tiny hamlet boasting of three or four stores, a blacksmith shop, and a station, from which an occasional train rambled away to the north on an unimportant branch line. Mr. Haskins smiled.

''There isn't much for them to do over there,'' he said. ''They might buy root-beer and candy and make themselves sick, but that's about all.''

''What we want is something they can go at hard,'' said Mr. Langham, frowning over the problem. ''Something that'll leave them healthily tired out.'' Another silence followed and then Sam asked:

''Would it do them any harm to sleep out of doors, sir?''

''Sleep out of doors? Why, on wet ground, yes,

I presume it would." He looked questioningly at Sam.

"I was thinking that we might have a hike, sir."

"A hike," repeated the Chief thoughtfully. "I don't know, Craig. You see——"

"That's what they need, Chief," said Mr. Gifford. "What's your idea, Sam?"

"Well, I thought we might select a place say five or six miles away, divide the fellows into two parties and set out with blankets and grub and see which party could get there first. There might be some sort of prize or reward. Of course, it would mean sleeping outdoors——"

"But if the parties started out together it would just be a race, wouldn't it?" objected Mr. Gifford. "Pretty strenuous, I'm afraid, Sam."

"I thought we could set out different ways, perhaps. We could see that the fellows didn't overdo it. The idea would be to get there first, but in good condition. That would mean resting along the way, taking the easiest routes, and so on. It's just a suggestion. And I don't know anything about the country around here. Maybe it wouldn't do."

"I say," exclaimed Steve Brown, "isn't there a picnic-ground or something of that sort over at Miles, Chief? Seems to me I remember a big open building near the railway."

"Yes, a park they used to hold Chautauquas in. You mean we could sleep there, eh? Not a bad idea. In fact, the scheme sounds good. What do you think?"

"Excellent," voted Mr. Haskins. "And I'd like it myself first-rate. My legs certainly need stretching."

"We'd have to take blankets and eats, wouldn't we?" asked Steve. "And some cooking things, too, I suppose. Or we might find some place to feed over there."

"It would be more fun for the boys if we cooked our own grub," said Mr. Gifford. "Let's do it, Chief!"

"Well, by Jove, we will! And I'll go along. Now let's figure on rations and luggage."

And that is how the Marathon Picnic, as the boys called it, came about. Shortly after dinner—siesta being disregarded that day—the boys congregated in The Wigwam and the plan, of which they had already caught an inkling, was explained

to them. It met with instant acclaim. Had the Chief suggested a trip to the North Pole they would have welcomed it. Mr. Gifford and Sam alternately selected members for the rival parties until every boy had a place on the "Reds" or the "Blues," as they chose to call them. Mr. Haskins was finally drawn by Mr. Gifford and Steve Brown by Sam. Mr. Langham, when they set out, elected to throw in his lot with the "Reds," Mr. Gifford's party. Every fellow rolled up his blanket, tied the ends together and slipped it over a shoulder. Then he donned his raincoat. Food and a few cooking utensils were apportioned out and went into pockets or were slung over shoulders, and a tin cup graced every belt. At half-past two all was ready for the start.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE "BLUES" WIN!

MILES, a small village about four miles distant from camp in a straight line, was on the opposite side of Indian Lake. A study of the map had shown that if the trip was made entirely afoot the distance was nearly seven miles, whether one passed around the southern end of the lake or the northern. Some light advantage appeared to lie with the northern route, since one could finish the journey over the railroad track and so save a possible half-mile. Mr. Gifford and Sam had tossed a coin for choice of routes and the former had won and selected the northern way. Almost on the minute of the half-hour the two parties, shouting good-bye, set off from in front of The Wigwam, the "Reds" hiking briskly away toward the road that led to the Indian Lake station and the "Blues" skirting the lake to cross the playing-field and ultimately reach the road which led by

many turns and angles about the southern or lower end of the lake.

It had been agreed that after half of the distance had been covered each party should be divided into a first and second group, the slower walkers in the latter, each group in charge of one of the councillors. This was to keep the weaker boys from straggling and, possibly, getting lost. Filled with enthusiasm and a physical energy generated by three days of inactivity, the "Blues" set off at a pace which would have left them tired out before half the distance had been traversed had Sam allowed them to continue. But once away from camp he took the lead and made the fellows suit their pace to his.

"We've got seven miles to do, fellows," he said, "and maybe more, and the idea is not only to get there first, but to get there in good condition. If we overdo it now we'll suffer later. Three miles an hour over the roads we'll have is plenty fast enough. Some of you could do better than that and some of you will find it a little too fast. After a while we'll divide into two squads and Mr. Brown will take one and I'll take the other. Those of you who feel the pace can take it more slowly

with the second crowd. If any of you have to stop you must tell Mr. Brown or me, so you won't get left behind. There isn't any reason why you should, though, because there'll be a rest of a few minutes every half-hour."

Steve Brown joined Sam, and, turning occasionally to make sure that none of the nineteen youths who comprised the squad was straggling, the two councillors and the boys about them chatted and laughed and had a very merry time of it in spite of the steady downpour of rain. The first half-mile was across country and, toward the end of it, the going was mostly up-hill. At last, though, they came suddenly on the road, a narrow and ever-winding country lane just wide enough for one vehicle. Fortunately, the soil was mostly sand and the roadway was consequently fairly dry. At least, there were few of the puddles and muddy stretches which they were to encounter later on. The woods closed in on each side of them, although occasionally they had a brief view of the lake, grey and sullen, a half-mile or so below. It was shortly after reaching the road that Sam called the first halt after consulting what he called his "one-jewelled watch."

Some of the boys had not yet found their second wind and were glad to perch themselves for a few minutes along the side of the road. The weather was by no means chilly and those whose raincoats were of rubber found them much too warm, especially as they also had their blanket-rolls across back and chest. Several begged to be allowed to remove their coats, but this neither Sam nor Steve thought it wise to consent to. A few minutes past three they went on, some of the older and stronger fellows inclined to grumble over the slowness of the pace. The road presently turned abruptly toward the east and led them out on the summit of a sparsely-wooded ridge from which they had a view of the lower end of the lake and of the country on the other side. On a fair day, as Steve said, they might have seen the camp very easily, for they had reached a point nearly halfway around the end of the lake and much of the eastern shore was visible. The councillors discussed the advisability of cutting across near the lake and trusting to pick up the road again later, and the boys were much in favour of the plan, but it was finally decided that, although they might gain in distance, the more difficult travelling would

equalise matters and that it would be best to keep to the highway even though it insisted on fairly turning its back on their destination.

By the time the next rest was taken some straggling was already in evidence. Several of the younger fellows showed a disposition to slow down, and Sam and Steve decided that at the next stop the party should be divided into the two squads as planned. It was then nearly twenty minutes to four and they judged that they had covered about three miles and a half, although as no one had a pedometer save young Chase, and his was, as he explained, absolutely unreliable, this estimate was mostly guesswork and, as indicated later, probably too great by the better part of a mile. At five minutes past four, they having then struck fairly westward once more, with, as they believed, the lower end of the lake well behind them, another halt was called and Steve recruited for his rear-guard.

Strangely, however, few of the nineteen would allow that they were at all tuckered. Horace Chase and Billy White confessed to blistered heels, but were all for keeping up with the first group. The councillors had to take matters into

their own hands and, using their best judgment, relegate eight of the nineteen to the rear squad. Most of the eight objected strenuously. They felt themselves utterly disgraced. Mutiny was in the air and the two councillors had to be very stern and short-spoken before affairs were finally settled. Then Sam with his eleven started off a bit more briskly and Steve, waving a laughing good-bye and threatening to get there first, after all, held his overeager and disgruntled squad to what they grumblingly assured him was a snail's-pace.

There was less talking now in the ranks. Fellows had found it wise to husband their breath, for the road had grown muddy and wet and the walking was harder. The rear squad soon dropped from sight around a turn and Sam's party, pushing forward at a good rate of speed, began to look for signs of civilisation. But another half-hour passed, with its accompanying rest—only two or three minutes this time—before they caught sight of their first house. It was a deserted cabin perched on a gravelly hill just off the road. But even the sight of an empty house was welcome, since it seemed to promise a settlement, near at hand. And, a quarter of an hour later,

the settlement, such as it was, appeared. There was a country store and half a dozen houses in it, and Sam called a halt while he entered the store to make inquiries. Several of the boys went inside with him, while the others seated themselves on the edge of the rickety platform outside to rest.

The only occupant of the store was an elderly man who hobbled forward with the aid of a hickory stick. He was very deaf and Sam was forced to twice repeat his question before the store-keeper sensed it. Then he grinned a toothless grin and asked: "On foot, be ye?"

Sam assured him that they were and the old man shook his head.

"It's a goodish way to Miles," he said. "Most four miles, I guess, by the road."

"Four miles!" ejaculated Sam. "But, man alive, we've walked at least six and it was supposed to be only seven when we started."

"Where'd ye come from?"

"The Wigwam, a boys' camp on Indian Lake. It's about three miles this side of Indian Lake village."

"Well, if ye was goin' to Miles why didn't ye

cross the lake?'' inquired the man contemptuously.

''We wanted to walk. Does this road we're on now go to Miles?''

''Uh-huh, mostly. It goes to Tappenville, too, and Lower Millis. If you keep to the right turn about a mile an' a half beyond here and then take the middle branch a ways beyond that ag'in you'll likely get to Miles.''

''Is there any shorter way?''

''Well, there is an' there ain't. If you go across that field yonder an' find Benny James's place likely he'll row ye across to t'other side, an' then——''

''But we want to walk,'' said Sam impatiently.

''Uh-huh; all right. Keep the road then, son.''

''And there's no short cut?''

''I don't know as there be. Still, ye might strike off across the hill when ye reach the first fork. Likely you'd pick up the road ag'in beyond Lower Millis.''

''I see.'' Sam frowned thoughtfully. Finally, ''I guess we'd better stick to the road,'' he said.

''Uh-huh; I would if I was you, son.''

Rather dejectedly then they took up the jour-

ney once more. "I don't believe the old codger knows what he's talking about," grumbled Tom Crossbush. "How can it be four miles further when we've walked five or six?"

"Five or six!" said another of the party. "I'll bet we've walked ten!"

A little further on, the rain, which for the past hour had been hardly more than a drizzle, stopped entirely, and off came raincoats. Walking was a bit easier then. The road went up hill and down and turned and twisted crazily. At the first fork a sign-post pointed one way to Tappenville and another to Lower Millis, but said nothing of Miles. But they took the right-hand road, after Sam had pinned a note of direction to Steve on the post, and went doggedly on, resisting the temptation to leave the highway and try the short-cut across country. The road seemed bent on travelling in every direction save that in which they wanted to go. There never was such a stupid, stubborn old road as that! Murmurs of discontent began to be heard. The fellows were thoroughly disappointed, too, because all hope of winning the hike was now idle. It was already after five o'clock and doubtless by this time the "Reds" were com-

fortably encamped and waiting for supper. The thought of that supper encouraged them to renewed exertions.

It's a long lane that has no turning, and at last Sam, who had been watching anxiously for a good half-hour for their destination, gave an exclamation of relief. The winding road turned a sudden corner, and there, straight ahead, loomed a white triangle on which was lettered: "Railroad Crossing—Look Out for the Engine." With whoops of joy the boys gained the track and set off northward, fatigue and disappointment forgotten in the prospect of reaching the end of the journey. Only a hundred yards or so further on a wider road than the one they had abandoned crossed the railway. On one side, perhaps a half-mile away, lay Indian Lake, glimpsed through a fringe of trees that bordered a meadow. In that direction stood a red-brown farm-house, and the sun, slipping for an instant from the wrack of clouds above the western horizon, flashed ruddily against the distant windows. Turning their backs on the lake, they followed the new road. A house came into sight, a dog barked at them, somewhere a rooster crowed, civilisation drew near. And then, with-

out warning, the brief glimpse of sunlight faded and the rain began once more. And at almost the same moment a lane branched to the right ahead of them and a sign nailed to a tree directed them to "Centennial Park."

With raincoats thrown hastily over their heads to keep their blankets dry the boys broke into a trot. The lane ascended a hill, a gleam of white shone through the trees ahead, voices came to them, and a moment later they were "out of the woods" in more ways than one. The trees gave place to open turf and they were on a hill, the lake stretching below in the rain-blurred twilight. In front was a roofed building, open on all sides. To the left were some smaller structures; sheds, booths, and so on, all tightly boarded up. Under the big roof of the auditorium boys were lounging or moving about, and as Sam's squad crossed the park a shout of greeting met them.

With rather less enthusiasm the newcomers waved and answered. Tom Crossbush turned to Sam. "They aren't all there," he said.

"Maybe, if Mr. Brown comes along soon, we'll beat them after all!"

"Why, no, they're not all there by any means,"

answered Sam. "I see only about a dozen. Perhaps the rest are around, though."

"They're all kids, too, sir!" said Joe Groom excitedly. "They must be Mr. Gifford's second squad, sir!"

By this time they were close to the building and some of the boys came out to meet them and Mr. Haskins called from the shelter.

"That your first squad, Craig?" he asked.

"Yes. Is that yours?"

"No, second. Goodness knows where the rest are. We've been here nearly an hour. Either they took the wrong road or we did. We haven't seen them since about four o'clock!"

Sam smiled. "How many of you are there?" he asked.

"Only eleven," replied Mr. Haskins ruefully. "You've got us beaten, I guess, unless the Chief and Gifford show up soon. I suppose your second squad will be right along?"

Sam shrugged. "I don't believe so. As near as I can figure it, we've done about nine miles, and I guess the younger chaps will be pretty well fagged. Queer how you got by your first squad, though."

"Mighty queer," agreed the other. "There was only one place——"

He stopped and gazed toward the entrance. Sam's eyes followed. Out from the grove moved a group of boys. "There they are now," said Sam. "Only——"

But further speech was drowned by the shout that went up from the assembled "Blues." Over the rail or down the steps they fled to meet the arrivals, a small band of eight youths led by a councillor who came across the turf with a springy, unwearied step. Sam stared in surprise. They weren't "Reds" at all! They were——

"You win," said Mr. Haskins, with a chuckle.

## CHAPTER IX

### DOUGHNUTS IN THE RAIN

"Why, Sam, we took a chance," Steve Brown was explaining a few minutes later. "I got your message all right, but that road didn't look good to me. So Chase shinned a tree on a hill and had a look around and said he could see this building plainly about two miles away. And we decided that if we were to beat you fellows to it we'd better cut across lots. So we did. Had a bit of tough going for half a mile or so and then found the lake and followed a sort of path that led along the edge of it till we struck a good road down there. Came through the village, made sure we were headed right, and—here we are! How long have you been here?"

"Not more than quarter of an hour," said Sam. "I wish I'd had the sense to think of that tree business, Steve. I'll bet you we've walked ten miles this afternoon!"

Steve chuckled. "Don't you care, Sam. We

beat the "Reds" to it. What sort of roads did you find, Mr. Haskins?"

"Very good, most of the way. Pretty wet and muddy in places, but not half bad. I can't imagine, though, what became of the others. We lost sight of them about four o'clock, and——"

"You'll soon know what happened," interrupted Sam, "for here they come now!"

It was a weary and footsore band that detached itself from the gloom of the trees and approached through the drizzling rain. Mr. Langham was limping badly and many of the boys literally dragged their feet. Mr. Gifford's smile was a bit grim as he waved a reply to the shout of welcome.

"Better late than never," said Mr. Haskins. "What happened, Gifford?"

"Lost our way somehow. Don't ask us where we've been. We don't know. Of all beastly country——!"

"It was quite all my fault," interposed the Chief. "It came to a question of two roads and I picked out the wrong one. Well, here we are, anyway, and I guess we're not all dead yet. Sam, as the defeated ones, we ought to do the toiling, but you can see that our crowd is pretty badly

tuckered out. Suppose you and Steve take some of the chaps and see what can be done about getting some fires lighted." He glanced about the building dubiously. "Not a very warm place for the night, is it?" he continued. "Those boys ought to get their feet dry, but I don't just see——"

"You leave it all to us, sir," said Sam. "Better sit down and get rested. Sorry you had such hard luck."

"Yes, it was tough on some of the youngsters. This place seems dry, at least. Well——"

The Chief's voice trailed into silence and, removing the blanket from his shoulder, he made a cushion of it and sat down with his back to the railing. Then he smiled up at Sam and Steve ruefully. "I'm just about all in," he said. "I don't see how some of those boys stood it. By Jove, I don't!"

"Don't worry about them, Chief," said Mr. Gifford. "They'll be as fit as fiddles in the morning. The question now is——"

"Fires and grub," interrupted Steve cheerfully.

"You get your breath back, Andy. Sam and Mr. Haskins and I will look after things. 'Blues,'

this way! Come on, fellows, we're going to hunt wood and build some fires. Scatter now! Bring in all the dead branches you can find and anything else that will burn. Never mind if it's wet, bring it along. But don't do any damage to anything. Remember you're Scouts, fellows. Carry the wood over there where you see those barrels and boxes. Hustle now!"

Off they went with a will. Sam and Steve and Mr. Haskins crossed to where, at some distance, a litter of broken boxes and old barrels was piled. Here, as they expected, they found a sandy pit in which it was evidently the custom to burn rubbish. "We can have a roaring old blaze here," said Steve. "Guess, though, we'd better have, say, three small fires that we can get close up to. Wish there was a shelter near, though. I suppose this stuff is sopping wet."

He pulled some of the underneath boxes out and found that they were in places fairly dry, however, and he and Sam proceeded to knock them to pieces and store them in one of the barrels, which they turned on its side. Mr. Haskins wandered away toward a long open shed used for carriages. A minute or two later the boys began to arrive

with armfuls of branches, fragments of boxes and such. It was all pretty wet, but, as Steve said, once get your fire started and they'd burn finely and all the hotter for being damp. Then Mr. Haskins returned dragging a big piece of canvas, evidently at one time either a portion of a tent or a tarpaulin such as is used to cover loaded wagons.

"I thought," he explained, exhibiting his find proudly, "that if we could manage to spread this over our heads somehow——"

"Bully!" cried Steve. "We'll fix it. Haskins, you're a wonder!" And the older councillor smiled more proudly still.

And fix it they did, finally. One side of it was laid on a row of the empty boxes and held in place by stones. At the other corners they fixed poles—or what answered for poles; one was a long branch and the other an eight-foot board,—binding the canvas to them with bits of string and wire, and sinking the other ends in the gravel at the edge of the pit. Fortunately, there was no wind, or their improvised lean-to would soon have toppled down. As it was it was by no means large enough to shelter more than half their

number, but it did make a fairly dry place in which to serve supper.

Steve took Sam and they hurried off in search of birch-trees. At first it seemed that birch was the one variety of tree which did not grow in the vicinity of Centennial Park, but at last, far down near the railroad track, they descried a group showing ghostlike in the fast-gathering twilight, and it took them but a minute or so to circle the trees with their knives and pull off strips of the bark. When they turned back each had a good armful. Then they set about starting the fires. Steve whittled a pile of shavings from a piece of fairly dry pine board under the shelter, tore some of the birch-bark into small strips, and then laid the fire on the gravel a few feet from the lean-to and applied a match. The bark sizzled and curled and flamed, the shavings caught, and Steve fed the blaze with the driest of his wood. There was a doubtful minute, but at last the fire took hold with a roar, and the boys, who had begun to gather about, sent up a cheer. Mr. Gifford and several of the older youths appeared with cooking utensils and food and took possession of the shelter. Two more fires were started from the first, and soon

what had appeared a half-hour before to be a rather hopeless and depressing scene took on an air of cheerfulness and comfort.

Kitty-Bett had provided plenty of cold meat, bread and butter, and hard-boiled eggs. There were doughnuts, too, dozens and dozens of them, and those the boys devoured first, last, and all the time. There was bacon ready for the frying, but Mr. Gifford wisely decided not to attempt to cook it under the circumstances. But three huge kettles of tea were brewed, cans of condensed milk were punctured, sugar and tin spoons were passed around, and a deep and all-pervading silence held for many minutes, a silence only accentuated by infrequent remarks, short and crisp: "Sugar, Billy!" "Pass this along, Tom." "Meat, please!"

When the first pangs of hunger had been quieted, conversation began briskly. At least half the boys narrated their personal adventures and experiences, boasted of blistered heels and tired muscles. Very kindly, the rain had decreased to a fine drizzle that was scarcely more than a heavy mist, and the twenty or so boys who were unable to crowd under the tarpaulin ate in some comfort,

curled up on the ground in their raincoats. From time to time the fires were replenished, more lazily as the warmth and food and the good hot tea began to have effect. Kitty-Bett had provided with a lavish hand. Had he not done so the prospect of breakfast in the morning would have looked dark, for there were never forty-three healthier appetites gathered together than those which the "Reds" and the "Blues" finally managed to appease that evening!

At last, when no one could hold another crumb, the fellows toppled against each other and the talk grew fainter and fainter and ever more murmurous, until, finally, a full-fledged snore broke forth, and the sleepy youths roused themselves with a laugh.

"McDowell's suggestion is a good one," said Mr. Langham. "I vote we accept it, fellows. Who's for bed?"

Yawns of assent answered, and Ed Thursby, rising unsteadily to his feet, collided with one of the poles which held up the tarpaulin. Down came the shelter with a swish of wet canvas, sparks flew from the fires, and some twenty boys disappeared from sight amidst shouts of laughter

from those outside. Out they came, rolling or crawling, and the party set off for bed.

Bare boards, even when softened by a raincoat and a single thickness of blanket, do not make a downy couch, but no complaints were heard. One by one, with shoes for a pillow, the tired boys dropped off to sleep. Over them blew the damp night air, and from the roof and trees came the steady patter of rain-drops. And from forty-three motionless, blanket-wrapped forms came evidences of healthy slumber.

## CHAPTER X

### SIDNEY SINGS A DITTY

Breakfast was over by half-past eight the next morning, and the boys and councillors, fortified by plenty of fried bacon, bread and butter, and hot coffee—to say nothing of the remains of the doughnut crop—were ready for the return trip. Spirits were high, for sleep had rested and refreshed them, and, to make life seem still better worth living, the sun was out radiantly, the sky was washed clean of clouds, and a crisp little breeze blew from the distant lake.

It was decided that those wishing to make the return journey on foot might do so, but that Mr. Gifford should cross the lake by boat and return with the launch and a sufficient number of the camp row-boats to accommodate all who preferred to go home that way. Fourteen fellows voted to foot it back to camp by the northern route, and Sam and Steve and Mr. Haskins decided to go with them. So, as soon as breakfast was over

they started off leisurely, while Mr. Gifford made his way to the village to secure a boat to make the trip across to The Wigwam. The fellows who were to await his return waved good-bye to the pedestrians and then set about amusing themselves.

That walk back was thoroughly enjoyable. They had three hours and a half to do it in and they could loiter as much as they pleased. The roads were fast drying off under the influence of sun and breeze and there was just enough zest in the morning air to make exercise a pleasure. Muscles soon forgot their stiffness, and by the time the little party of seventeen had left the railroad track and were on the dirt road everyone was very merry. The woods along the way were fragrant with the odour of moist earth and fresh verdure, and every leaf looked crisp and happy after the rain. Birds fluttered and darted, chirped and sang, and when, presently, the party paused at a tiny brook that crossed the road to dip their tin cups in the sparkling water it seemed that even the brook was trying its very best to tell its joy.

There were many pauses and rests. As the

sun grew warmer and the breeze lessened a comfortable lassitude took the place of the first eagerness, and the fellows were quite willing to stop on any pretext. Often they had to wait for Mr. Haskins, who, it appeared, was having a most glorious time. He was forever darting off into the woods to look at a tree he didn't recognise, or an oddly shaped fungus, or to examine some lichen or moss. Invariably he returned with a trophy to exhibit and expatiate on. His pockets were quite filled long before they reached Indian Lake. They didn't enter the village, but passed it by along the lake. There was a small amusement park there; a boat-landing and some swings and a merry-go-round and a few booths where one could buy soda-water and pop-corn and candy and post-cards; and the party managed to spend a quarter of an hour there most profitably for the vendors. They tried the swings and drank soda and bought candy and pop-corn. As few of the fellows had any money with them Mr. Haskins became banker and recorded the debts in the little memorandum book he always carried. Then they went on again, even more leisurely now by reason of the things they had eaten and drank, and so, at a few minutes

past noon, came in sight of The Wigwam and were hailed by those who had returned by boat. Perhaps the pedestrians swaggered a little as they drew near. Why not? Had they not proved their superiority to the faint-hearted ones who had had to be carried home? Indeed, yes! And so, gathering at the flag-pole, they raised their voices in three lugubrious groans for "the Molly-coddles!" And Mr. Haskins groaned as loudly as any.

Two days later the tennis tournament started. In order to swell the number of entries, Sam had allowed Steve to persuade him to be his partner in the doubles. Sam had never played tennis but three or four times in his life, but Steve got him out of bed at half-past five on two mornings and tried to teach him the game. The attempt was not greatly successful, however, and Steve and Sam, giving fifteen, were speedily eliminated from the contest. Even Steve's excellent playing couldn't quite make up for Sam's earnest but futile efforts. The boys who watched the two councillors play against George Porter and Ned Welch had difficulty in keeping from laughing at Sam's wild attempts and awkward blunders. Finally, discover-

ing that Sam, too, thought he was funny, they had their laughs and Sam didn't mind at all. Millson Charrit, the Indians' clever shortstop, captured first place in the singles, and Porter and Welch finally won the doubles championship, but not until Joe Groom and Tom Crossbush, giving half-fifteen, had run the last set to 8-all.

Then came the Annual Field Day, with nine events, including a mile and seven-eighths cross-country run. There was broad- and high-jumping, pole-vaulting, sprinting, shot-putting, discus-throwing, and low-hurdling. There were no remarkable records established, although Gerald Jones did better the camp record for the pole-vault. Perhaps the surprise of the afternoon occurred when Billy White, thirteen years old, romped in twenty yards ahead of his nearest competitor in the cross-country run. For that Billy got his name burned on a nice clean pine panel and hung in the "Trophy Room," by which name a certain section of wall in The Wigwam was known. To be sure, Billy had not bettered the existing record, but he had come within a few strides of equalling it, and, in view of his age, his performance was

considered worthy of perpetuation in the annals of camp athletics.

Meanwhile the Indians continued to pin defeats on their baseball rivals, although their games with the Mascots were never certain victories until the last man was out. The Mascots gave Mr. Gifford's team several warm brushes, and occasionally won a contest, but three times out of five George Porter's pitching decided the day. The Brownies, ever hopeful, went down to defeat regularly and cheerfully. That is not quite true, though, for the Brownies did win two games that summer, beating both the Mascots and the Indians.

It was shortly after the Field Day and well along toward the last of August that Sam received, one morning, a letter from Tom Pollock. Tom wrote that he and Sid Morris were coming up to pay a visit if Sam could find a place for them to sleep, either at camp or nearby. In some perplexity Sam consulted Mr. Langham.

"No trouble about it, Sam," was the reply. "We've got extra cots and plenty of room to set them up. And there's always something to eat. We're very glad to have visitors. Wish we had

more of them. Tell your friends to come as guests of The Wigwam for as long as they like to stay."

Sam thanked the Chief gratefully and hurried off to send a reply, and four days later Sam and Steve walked over to Indian Lake and met the visitors on the arrival of the eleven-twenty train, which to-day rambled in at a quarter to twelve. They came back in an ancient vehicle obtained from the local livery stable, laughed and chattered all the way, and descended in front of The Wigwam a few minutes late for dinner. Each of the visitors carried a suit-case and Sidney Morris also had with him a large bundle wrapped in blue paper, which, when Sam could no longer restrain his curiosity, Sid informed him, contained two four-pound boxes of mixed chocolates.

"For the crowd, you know," explained Sid. "Kids are usually crazy about candy. I remember last summer at the lake I'd have given ten dollars a pound for the stuff lots of times. You'd better take charge of it, Sam, and ladle it out to them after dinner."

"We almost missed the train while he went after that," said Tom Pollock. "We had to run all the way from Budlong's to the station."

"It was fine of you," said Sam, "and the fellows will be tickled to death."

"*Sickened* to death, you mean," chuckled Steve Brown.

The new arrivals caused much interest in camp, and after siesta—Tom and Sidney, being warned of that period of enforced quiet, wandered off into the woods—they were duly presented to most of the older chaps. The candy was fairly distributed, one big box going to The Wigwam and one to The Tepee, and made a great hit. For the next hour or two Sidney was easily the most popular fellow in camp! The Brownies and Indians held practice that afternoon—they were to meet on the morrow—and Tom and Sidney volunteered for service, Tom with the Indians and Sid with Steve's team. Tom's fame as a pitcher soon got about and some of the boys asked Sam if he wouldn't get Tom to pitch a little for them. So, after practice was over, Sam donned a mask and protector and Tom walked to the box.

"All right, fellows!" called Sam, after Tom had slammed a dozen balls over in the warming-up process. "Who wants to knock the first home run?"

Rather sheepishly, Joe Groom picked out a bat and stood up at the plate. Steve Brown smilingly offered to umpire.

"Don't knock him out of the box, Joe," counselled someone. "I want a hit myself."

"That's right, Joe. Be easy with him. A three-bagger will do!"

Sam stooped and held three fingers against his mitt, Tom wound up, stepped forward easily, and the ball travelled to the plate. Joe, frowning intently, swung. The ball thumped into Sam's mitt.

"Strike!" droned Steve, and the audience chuckled. Joe grinned and tapped his bat on the plate.

"A peach of a drop," muttered George Porter admiringly.

"All right, Tom!" called Sam, thoroughly enjoying himself. "One more, now, just like it!" But only two fingers lay against the mitt this time and when the ball broke it curved cannily to the left, and Joe, backing away from it, heard again Mr. Brown's fateful, "Strike—two!" A howl went up from the watchers, who now began to cluster behind Mr. Brown in their desire to watch the breaks.

"Right over now, Tom!" Sam held his hands wide and Tom nodded, wiped one palm on his trousers, poised the ball and shot it forward. Joe declared that he never saw it from the time it left the pitcher's hand until he looked around and saw it in Sam's mitten. "Talk about your fast ones!" he marvelled. "Say, honest, fellows, that ball *travelled!*"

"He's out!" called Steve, and there was a rush to take his place. George Meldrum secured it, and after him Tom Crossbush, and then a dozen others tried their fortunes. But not a hit resulted. Inshoot and out, slow ball and fast, drop and floater, high ball and low, succeeded each other, Sam changing the pace in a thoroughly bewildering manner and Tom answering every signal. Finally Steve Brown tried his luck and, after slamming ineffectually twice, managed to roll the ball a dozen yards toward third base. Then Mr. Gifford, egged on by the boys, had his inning and, when Tom had fooled him on two low ones at which he made no offer, caught a fast one and sent it arching into right field, so winning much applause.

"Foul!" declared Steve Brown.

"*What!*" demanded Mr. Gifford.

"Foul!"

"Robber!" shrieked the batter, imitating an infuriated player and brandishing his bat over Steve's head. "You're a bum umpire!"

"The bench for youse," growled Steve. "Off the field!"

"How much are they payin' yer?"

"That'll be about all," returned Steve, with much dignity. "You're fined ten dollars."

Mr. Gifford, disgustedly hurling his bat to the ground and then kicking it out of the way, stalked off, muttering, to the delight of the fellows. On the way back to the camp Tom was surrounded by a guard of admiring youths who begged him to show them how to pitch that drop or that floater. Sidney was no longer the hero.

The visitors had a good time every minute. They joined the boys in the water at "plunge," ate ravenously of everything set before them at supper, declaring themselves "strong for those doughnuts," and entered into everything that came along with genuine enthusiasm. Tom conducted a class in pitching after supper until it was too dark to see the ball. Later, at camp-fire, Mr. Langham called on the guests for entertainment.

Tom begged off, but Sidney, who appeared to be in the most boisterous spirits, declared that if someone had a concertina he would chant them a ditty. He finally compromised on a banjo, however, and when he had picked at it a moment, broke out into a monotonous tune to which he supplied words as follows:

"O—oh, we came here on the train to-day, it was a dandy ride.
Tom sat upon the cowcatcher, but I sat down inside.
The train it was an hour late and we were late as well;
The reason why the train was late the conductor wouldn't tell.
Sam Craig he met us at the place where we alighted down;
He had a smile upon his face, and so had Mr. Brown!
They put us in an ancient thing, I guess it was a hack;
And I think I'd rather walk than ride whenever I go back!
We met a royal welcome here and many things to eat,
Roast beef and apple pie and such until we couldn't speak.

The fellows are a dandy lot, the councillors the same,
The Chief likewise, and here's to him; Mr. Langham is his name.
We played baseball and swam and dived, and then we ate some more,
And when you mention doughnuts I would like to cry 'encore!'
We like the way you've treated us, you're all in our good books,
But oh, the one we like the best he is the man who cooks!"

Sidney ended with a final strum of the banjo and the audience set up a wild howl of laughter and applause and loudly demanded more. But Sid declared that that was the only song he knew. "Besides," he said, stretching out and pillowing his head on Tom's knees, "I'm too full of doughnuts to sing. Somebody else try it."

"I don't think any of us could improvise as well as that," replied the Chief, with a laugh. "I call that pretty clever, fellows."

"Not bad," said Tom judicially, "but he got the last line wrong, Mr. Langham. That wasn't the way I taught it to him."

"You!" grunted Sidney scathingly, "you couldn't find a rhyme for 'lemon'!"

"There isn't any," piped up young Chase.

"Oh, yes, there is," said Tom.

"What?" Sidney demanded.

"The rhyme for 'lemon' is 'Sidney,' " was the sweet response. After they got through chuckling at that bit of wit they sang songs until it was time for prayer.

It wasn't until the boys had retired to the dormitories that Sam had an opportunity to hear the home news from Tom and Sidney. The three sat on the porch of The Tepee and talked until it was nearly time for "lights" and Sam heard all the gossip of Amesville. It wouldn't greatly interest us, but Sam found it most absorbing and asked many questions and began to feel a little bit homesick withal. At ten they went to bed, Sidney and Tom being accommodated with cots sandwiched in between Sam's and Harry Codman's, an arrangement that allowed them to lie very close together and whisper cautiously long after they should have been silent.

Tom and Sidney remained until the second day and then, cheered to the echo by the campers,

climbed into that same "ancient thing" that Sid had so eloquently sung of and, accompanied by Sam, drove back to the station. Sam felt a bit forlorn after the train had whisked them away and he walked back to camp rather wishing that he too was on his way to Amesville. But that feeling didn't last long, not long enough, in fact, to prevent him from eating a very hearty dinner!

The day following Mr. Langham made a trip to Columbus. He was away only one night, returning the next afternoon with many packages, most of which represented commissions from the boys. He also brought back a piece of news which he divulged that evening at camp-fire. The nights were getting rather cool now and sweaters and blankets were appreciated, and the fire was bigger and hotter.

"Fellows," announced Mr. Langham, "coming up in the train this morning I ran into a man I used to know at college, a chap named Scovill. We got to talking about things, old times and old acquaintances, you know, just as you fellows do, I dare say——"

Chuckles from the circle.

"—and it turned out that Mr. Scovill has a

boys' camp, much like this, I suppose, though a bit older and larger, at a place called Mount Placid, just across the line in the next state. Seems they play baseball at his camp—Camp Placid, he calls it—and he thinks he's got the best summer-camp ball team around this part of the world. I told him''—Mr. Langham laughed softly —''I told him he might have a pretty fair team, but I knew of a better one. He asked where it was and what it was called, and I said it was located at Indian Lake and was called The Wigwam Baseball Team.''

Fervid applause from his hearers.

''Well, to make a long story short, fellows, he issued a challenge to us. 'You bring your team up to Placid,' he said, 'and play us. We've got plenty of room and can look after you overnight and give you some real food.' I thanked him and told him I'd talk it over when I got back and let him know. We looked up trains and found that we could leave here early in the morning, on that seven-forty-five express, and get to Mount Placid at about eleven. We'd have to stay over there until the next forenoon at about ten-thirty. The one objection is just this. If we are to try conclu-

sions with those folks we've got to make up a team of our best players, councillors included—the Placid team has four councillors on it, he tells me—and then get in a week or so of practice. If we do that it's going to interfere badly with our 'long hike,' which is set for September fourth. If we postpone the hike we interfere with Visitors' Day, the ninth. And we don't want to do that, because that date is set down in the camp-booklet and parents and friends are doubtless arranging to come then, and if we change the date there'll be a lot of confusion. Now, I've been wondering how it would do if we all went to Mount Placid, the whole kit and kaboodle of us——"

Interruption of enthusiastic cheering.

"—saw the game and then hiked back from there. We'd have seventy-odd miles to do and could take four days to do it in if necessary. It wouldn't be any trick to ship our things to Mount Placid by express a day or two ahead. There'd be the matter of railway fares, of course, and perhaps some of you wouldn't feel like paying out so much money." Mr. Langham paused questioningly.

"Nobody'd mind, sir," someone shouted. "We'll all go, Chief!"

"Well, that would be the only drawback, I guess. We'll think it over and talk about it again to-morrow night."

"Beg pardon, sir," said Steve Brown, "but wouldn't it be better to settle it now? If we're going to play those fellows we'll need a lot of practice. We ought to make up our team to-morrow and get busy. Every day would count, I guess."

"That's right, Chief," confirmed Mr. Gifford. "Why not find out now whether they are any of the fellows who would rather not go to the expense of the trip?"

"Then you like the idea, fellows?"

"Yes, sir!" "You bet we do!" "We'll trim those chaps, sir!"

"All right, then. Now, are there any of you who can't afford the trip, or who don't want to spend that much money? One way and another, it will probably cost each of you nearly four dollars."

Silence prevailed. There were whispers finally, but no dissenting voice until Gerald Jones piped

up with: "I haven't got that much, sir, and my folks are away from home and I don't know where to get at them, sir, but if you'd lend me about two dollars, sir——"

Amidst laughter Mr. Langham agreed to supply the deficiency for Jones and for any other boy whose funds were unequal to the demand, and enthusiasm reigned. Out of the babel that ensued Mr. Haskins was heard to inquire mildly when it was planned to make the trip. The Chief considered.

"This is Thursday," he said finally. "If we say a week from to-day for the game we will have five days for practice. Would that be sufficient, Andy?"

Mr. Gifford thought it would.

"Very well, then. I'll write Scovill to-morrow that we'll be with him next Thursday loaded for bear. We'll stay at his camp Thursday night and start the hike the next day. To-morrow we'll get the map and work it out. I'll leave the matter of forming the team to you, Andy. But you and Steve and Sam had better count on playing, I think. I dare say they've got a pretty good team up there and we don't want them to beat us too badly."

"With five afternoons of practice," replied Mr. Gifford confidently, "we can turn out a nine that will put the 'acid' in 'Placid'!"

And above the laughter Mr. Haskins was heard soberly and earnestly agreeing.

## CHAPTER XI

### MAKING THE NINE

Busy days followed. The Wigwam fixed its mind on the following Thursday and laboured enthusiastically. On the morning after Mr. Langham's announcement Mr. Gifford, Sam, and Steve walked up the slope to what was known as the Pulpit Tree, a big beech, under whose far-spreading branches divine service was held on Sundays when the weather permitted. There, sitting cross-legged on the ground, they held council over the making of the baseball team that was to represent the camp.

"Let's start with the battery," said Mr. Gifford. "Of course George Porter will pitch."

"He may not last the game, though," said Sam. "The question is who shall we put in after him?"

"One of us, I guess. Can you twirl?"

Sam shook his head. "Neither can I," said Steve. "How about you, Andy?"

"A little; at least, I've done some of it. But I haven't anything much on the ball. I used to be able to pitch an out-shoot that sometimes got over, and that's about all, except a fairly fast ball."

"My idea, then," said Sam, "would be for you to start the game and hold them as long as you can. Then we'll put in Porter."

"Maybe they won't tumble to you for three or four innings," said Steve encouragingly. "I dare say Porter will be able to go six. You'll catch, Sam?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so. Or if you think we'd better give the fellows all the show we can, Benson could start."

"We need a steady catcher, Sam. Of course, we want to let the follows get all the fun they can out of it, but there's no use throwing the game away on that account. Battery, then, to start, Gifford and Craig." He set it down on the pad he held. "Now then, who for first?"

"Wait a minute," said Sam. "Where's Steve going to play?"

"Put me in the outfield," said Steve. "I can

catch a fly fairly well, but that's about the limit of my abilities."

"I've seen you run bases quite a bit," said Mr. Gifford drily.

"You wouldn't want to play second?" asked Sam.

Steve looked alarmed. "Great Scott, no!"

"All right. Only I'd like mighty well to have a chap on second who could handle throws from the plate. Ed Thursby's a good fielder, but he's weak at covering the bag on a steal."

"Why don't you try it, Steve?" asked Mr. Gifford. "We've got a dozen fellows who can play in the outfield."

"Well, if you like," replied the other doubtfully. "Maybe I can get the hang of it after a few days."

"Good. Now, first baseman: Sawyer?"

"I suppose so," agreed Sam.

"Rot!" said Steve. "Murdock can play all around Sawyer."

It was Mr. Gifford's turn to look doubtful. "He's pretty good, but it seems to me Sawyer is steadier."

"Look here," said Sam. "Seems to me we're

going at this thing all wrong. What we ought to do is to pick out three or four fellows for each position and give them all a fair try. There's no need of selecting the final team until, say, next Tuesday. By that time the fellows will have shown what they can do."

"That's so," agreed Steve. "Why not make up two teams, Andy? A First and a Second, you know. Pick out those we think are the best for the First, and then if any of the Second team fellows show up better we can swap them over."

"That sounds reasonable. Come on, then. First Team: Porter, pitcher; Craig, catcher; Murdock, first baseman. Second Team: Gifford, pitcher; Benson, catcher; Sawyer, first baseman. How's that?"

"All right. Now let's go on with the First. Steve will play second. For shortstop there's either Fairchild or Charrit. I guess Charrit has the call. That puts Fairchild on the Second. For third?"

"Your man is better than mine there," said Mr. Gifford. "Don't you say so, Steve?"

"Yes, Jones ought to have it, unless you put

Crossbush there. He plays pretty well at first and might do better at third."

"We'll put him down for the Second," said Mr. Gifford. "For that matter, fellows, there's Thursby. He's going to get left out of the game unless we put him in the outfield. We've got to consider batting ability as well as fielding, haven't we?"

"That's so," Steve agreed. "Better put Thursby down on the Second and let Crossbush substitute. We've got to fix it so we can give them all a fair trial. It's not going to be so easy."

"First Team outfield, now. Peterson? Meldrum? And how about Codman? He's a bit young."

"We ought to get hitters in the outfield," suggested Sam. "Codman isn't much of a batter, is he, Andy?"

"No, he isn't. How about that centre fielder of yours, Steve? Wonson, isn't it?"

"Jack Wonson, yes. He's only fair, though. Joe Groom is a good hand with the stick. Why not put him in the outfield?"

"Might try him. That makes it Peterson, Mel-

drum, and Groom for the First. For the Second——"

"Codman," suggested Sam, "and Simpson."

"And Wonson?" asked Mr. Gifford.

"Give him a try," agreed Steve.

"That fixes it, then. Better have a substitute infielder, though, for the First."

"Temple," said Sam.

"Right-o. Anything else?"

"Don't think so." Steve took the list and looked it over. "That looks all right to me. Suppose Sam captains the First and you the Second, Andy."

"All right. I suppose some of the fellows are going to be disappointed."

"Bound to be some," agreed Steve. "Can't be avoided, though. We can take a good big string of substitutes, I suppose, and that will help some."

"If the game happened to go our way we might use a lot of subs," Sam said. "Anyway, we could take them along on the chance."

"You and Andy work up your batting orders," said Steve. "Put me about second on the list, Sam. If I can get my base one way or another I dare say I can worry that Placid pitcher."

"He will be mighty placid if you don't," chuckled Mr. Gifford.

"I'll copy your list off for you, Sam."

"I wonder who they'll have to umpire," said Steve while Mr. Gifford was busy writing. "Sometimes a good deal depends on that."

"Oh, I guess they'll find a chap who'll be fair to both sides," replied Sam.

"I don't doubt that. Only thing is, will he know how? I'd rather play with an umpire who knew how to ump and who was ag'in' me than with one who didn't know and was as fair as all-get-out. It's the blundering sort who raise the dickens with a game sometimes."

"There you are," said Mr. Gifford. "And let's start things up as soon after two as possible. We've got good material in camp, fellows, and we ought to be able to turn out a corking team. If we had two weeks instead of one we'd do it, too."

"Well, we've been playing steadily all summer," said Steve, "and it won't be for lack of practice if we get licked."

"Let's not get licked," said Sam quietly.

"Hm," said Steve, and, "Oh, all right," Mr. Gifford laughed. "Just as you say, Sam!"

Five days of hard work, then, for all hands. But enthusiasm was rampant and no one lagged. The journey to Mount Placid, the game, and the hike back had caught the fellows' fancy, and nothing much else was talked about. As Mr. Gifford had predicted, there were some boys who felt keen disappointment at being left off the teams, but they all tried their best not to show it. "Every fellow for the Camp!" was the slogan. On Monday the First and Second played a full nine-inning game and played it for all they were worth. It was understood that the first selections for the two teams were only tentative and that a player had only to show his right to a position on the First Team to get it. And with this in mind every fellow worked his hardest, either to stay where he was on the First or to secure promotion from the Second. There were a few changes, but not as many as might have been looked for. On the whole, the councillors' selections for the First Team proved wise ones.

That Monday game was ultimately won by Sam's team, 13 to 10, and was featured by a lot of hard hitting by both sides and some really fast fielding. Mr. Gifford, in the points for the Second,

pitched a fair game and Benson caught him handsomely. But George Porter was on his mettle, too, and had the better of the battle. Sam doubted the wisdom of allowing Porter to pitch the whole of nine innings, but the desire to win that game got the better of his discretion, and, besides, there was no one to take Porter's place.

On Tuesday there was no real game, but there was a full two hours of the most strenuous batting and fielding and base-running, with every candidate getting a chance. And then, on Tuesday evening, the three councillors got together and picked the team that was to battle for the honour of The Wigwam on Thursday. It was no light task, that, as Mr. Gifford explained later at camp-fire.

"We all wished," he announced to the attentive audience, "that a baseball team comprised eighteen men instead of nine, because there are at least eighteen of you who deserve places. It's been hard work making a choice in lots of cases, and we may have made mistakes. But we've done our honest best, fellows, and we've judged you only on performance. Some of you are going to be disappointed. That's unavoidable. To those

who have striven and failed the camp owes its thanks. One thing I am quite sure of, however, and that is that those of you who aren't chosen will hold no resentment, but will 'pull' just as hard. Well, here's the list, fellows."

Mr. Gifford leaned forward so that the firelight fell on the sheet of paper he held.

"Porter and Gifford, pitchers; Craig and Benson, catchers; Murdock, first base; Brown, second; Crossbush, third; Thursby, shortstop; Meldrum, right field; Groom, centre field; Peterson, left field; substitutes, Charrit, Temple, Sawyer, Simpson, and Wonson."

A hearty cheer arose as Mr. Gifford finished. Disappointed ones grinned hard and shouted loudest. Successful candidates were pummelled and thumped and there was a great to-do until Mr. Langham arose.

"I don't know much about it, fellows," he said, "but I guess we can trust Mr. Gifford and Mr. Brown and Mr. Craig. I feel certain that they have chosen fairly and well. A good many of you had to be left out. They left me out, too. And Mr. Haskins. But he and I, and all the rest of us who haven't been selected, are going to cheer

just as hard. I hope we shall win that game, fellows, but if we don't, let's show those Mount Placid chaps that we are bully good losers. In any case, we're going to have a good time. We're going to stand together and pull together for a victory, and if we don't get it we're going to keep on smiling. That's all, I guess, except that I think we ought to give a good big cheer for the team!"

It was given with a will, not once but twice, and there were cries of "Speech! Speech!" And that reminded someone that they hadn't been told who was to captain the team and the question was propounded. It was decided that the team members should vote for captain and instantly the names of the three councillors were proposed. But Mr. Gifford replied that he believed the honour should go to one of the boys and in the end the choice fell on Ed Thursby. They cheered Ed then and again demanded a speech, but the newly elected captain firmly refused to oblige. It was Mr. Gifford who finally came to his assistance.

"Since," he said, "Thursby is overcome with the honour you have done him and is blushing

over there so that for a moment I mistook him for the fire, I take it on myself to reply for him. Here's what Ed would say if he made that speech: 'Fellows, I appreciate what you've done and I thank you for it. Let's all do our best from now on. For my part, fellows, I don't see why we shouldn't everlastingly whale the daylights out of those chaps up there. Anyhow, let's try to! I thank you one and all!' "

When the laughter subsided Mr. Gifford added: "To-morrow, fellows, there'll be only a very short practice, for there's going to be a lot to do in the way of packing and getting ready. Right after siesta every fellow must get his bag ready. Don't put in more than you'll need. Remember that when we start the hike we've got to get down to essentials. Those of you who were here last year will know what to take. For the benefit of those who were not I'll just say that the nearer you can come to limiting your pack to a toothbrush and a cake of soap the better off you'll be! Now then, let's have a song or two to end up with. What'll it be, fellows?"

## CHAPTER XII

### ON CONQUEST BENT

At a few minutes before seven on Thursday morning the last coach rolled away from The Wigwam. Everyone was in fine spirits. The morning was mild and still, and the sun, low above the eastern hills, was burning off the last pearl-grey wraiths of curling mist from the surface of the lake, promising a fine day for the journey and the game to follow. Only Kitty-Bett and Jerry remained behind to keep camp. Up the long hill road went the coaches, swaying and creaking, while, inside and out, filled with the excitement of the adventure, the boys laughed and shouted merrily. At the last, since there had been a delay in starting due to Ned Welch's inability to remember where he had placed his suit-case, there was a wild gallop into the town, the crazy stages rolling like ships at sea, and an excited scrambling at the station where the through express puffed and hissed impatiently. Then they were off, with

the rumble and click of flying wheels in their ears and the green morning world speeding past them on each side.

They had one day-coach almost to themselves, and what few other passengers were there were good-natured and sympathetic. Had they not been they might have resented the noise and the pranks that ensued. After awhile, though, the boys quieted down. Most of them had been awake since dawn and by the middle of the forenoon many had laid their heads back and were frankly sleeping. Later they changed to a branch road. The new train, consisting of two coaches and a combination baggage and smoker, was already fairly well-filled when they descended on it, and so for the rest of the way many of them had to stand in the aisles or perch themselves on uptilted suit-cases. Fortunately, this phase of the journey was soon over and they were piling out on the platform of a small station where carriages and wagons awaited them and where three men in camp costume of grey shirts and khaki trousers smilingly welcomed them. One of the men was Mr. Scovill, and the other two were introduced as Mr. Phillips and Mr. Neetal. Mr. Scovill was a very tall man

with a thin face, sunburned, bearded, and kindly. The two councillors were young college men, one stout and jovial and the other slight and shy-looking. After introductions were over and baggage had been rounded up the party poured into the carriages and were whisked away over a pleasant sunlit road that ascended steeply, past pastures and knolls and across a rattling bridge that spanned a stream, toward where a rounded and wooded hill rose against the summer sky.

Mount Placid Camp was not greatly different from The Wigwam. The buildings, five in number, were spread along a narrow plateau at the base of the mountain from where one overlooked the valley below and had an uninterrupted view of many miles of interesting country beyond. The buildings were older than those at The Wigwam, and were weathered to pleasing tones of grey and brown. Some eighty grey-shirted youths had gathered in front of the mess-hall, the central building at the camp, and cheered lustily as the visitors rolled up. The Mount Placid boys averaged perhaps a year older than The Wigwam fellows, and they impressed Sam, for one, as being a particularly fine and healthy-looking lot. Mr.

Scovill, for the occasion, had cleared an entire dormitory, and to this the visitors were conducted. Three rows of cots left the long hall rather crowded, but nobody minded and there was a wild rush to claim beds. Dinner was served to the visitors at twelve o'clock, after which the resident fellows had theirs. The Chiefs and councillors of both camps ate together and quite filled one of the long tables. Mr. Scovill and his assistants, seven in all, were hospitable to a degree, and the food was excellent. It was quite a merry party, and before they left the table it had been decided that next year the Mount Placid Nine should journey to The Wigwam and play a return game.

"We may not be able to treat you as well as you're treating us, Scovill," said Mr. Langham, "but we'll do our best."

After the second table had been fed the fellows made friends quickly and, in groups of from two or three to a dozen, went over the camp and explored the trails that wound up the mountain. Shortly after dinner a powerful roadster automobile shot into sight up the road with a hoarse shriek of its horn and came to a stop in front of the camp. Mr. Scovill, excusing himself, walked

across and shook hands with the man who had leaped nimbly out and brought him over to the group of councillors.

He was a solidly built, broad-shouldered, and deep-chested man of about thirty-three or four, with a sunburned face, a boyish eagerness of manner, and a jovial laugh. There was something very winning in that laugh.

"Langham," said Mr. Scovill, "I want you to know Mr. York. Mr. York is a neighbour of mine and has a small place of a few thousand acres just below here. He has very kindly consented to umpire for us if that is agreeable to you. Mr. York, Langham is Director of The Wigwam Camp, at Indian Lake."

"Temporarily removed to Mount Placid," laughed Mr. Langham as he shook hands. "We'll be pleased to have Mr. York officiate this afternoon. Very kind of him, I'm sure, to accept such a thankless task."

"Not at all. I'm going to enjoy it," responded Mr. York, shaking hands with the visiting councillors. "I used to play a bit myself. You have a fine day for your visit, Mr. Langham."

The group seated themselves on the steps and

Mr. York, observing Sam closely, said: "I've seen you somewhere before, haven't I, Mr. Gray?"

"Craig is the name," corrected Mr. Scovill. Sam, surprised, shook his head doubtfully.

"I don't think so," he replied. "I live in Amesville, Ohio."

"Amesville! Of course! Thought I wasn't mistaken." Mr. York smiled in satisfaction. "I'll tell you where I saw you, Mr. Craig, and how. It was about three months ago. I stopped off at Amesville to see a friend of mine, John Holden. Perhaps you know him?"

Sam shook his head.

"Well, he's a newcomer in Amesville; practising law; a nice chap. You ought to meet him. When you go home drop into his office some day and tell him John York said you were to be friends. You'll like him and he will like you."

Sam murmured rather embarrassed thanks.

"It happened to be a Saturday and Johnny and I, having nothing better to do, jumped on a car and went out to see the high school team play ball with some visiting nine; forget who the other chaps were. Johnny used to play shortstop when I was catching for Warner College, and we're both

fans. So we went out and saw that game. It was a good one, too. You were catching for the Amesville team, Craig." Mr. York paused for corroboration and Sam nodded.

"You fellows won. You had a pitcher who had grey matter under his cap. Had a lot on the ball, too. What was his name?"

"Pollock, sir."

"That's it! I remember it was some sort of a fish. Well"—Mr. York turned to the others enthusiastically—"that chap Pollock turned the trick in the last inning as neatly as you please. As I recall it the score stood something like three to one in favour of Amesville. That right, Craig?"

"Yes, sir."

"The visitors were at bat and there were two out and the bases were filled. Mind you, the visitors only needed two to tie, and, with two gone, they were desperate. This chap Pollock had pitched a fine, heady game, and he went after the next batter as cool as a cucumber. Had two strikes on him, I think, when the man on third lit out for the plate on the wind-up. I suppose when Pollock got himself together that runner

was halfway to the plate. Now''—Mr. York put the question to one of the Mount Placid councillors —''what would you have done, Williams, if you'd been in Pollock's place?''

Mr. Williams hesitated. ''Only one thing to have done,'' he said finally. ''Plug to the catcher as fast as I knew how!''

Mr. York chuckled. ''That's what I'd have done. I guess that's what Craig here expected. But this Pollock chap had a head on his shoulders. When the man on third dug for the plate the other runners set out after him, of course. Well, Pollock realised that if he threw to the catcher the ball might go wide or the catcher might—begging Mr. Craig's pardon—might drop it or it might be too late in any event to make the out. So what does he do but whirl around and slam the ball over to third baseman, who was running back to cover the bag. Third baseman makes a nice catch, blocks off the runner from second and—there you are! Three out and the score three to two!''

''Clever work!'' said Mr. Williams. ''You're right, Mr. York; that fellow had brains.''

''You bet he had! Where is he now, Craig?''

"Amesville, sir. He has two more years in High School."

"Isn't that the same chap who visited camp a week or so ago?" asked Mr. Gifford.

"Yes, that was Tom," replied Sam. "He's a nice fellow and we think he's a pretty fine pitcher."

"Looked so to me," agreed Mr. York. "And I want to say, too, that you caught as pretty a game as I want to see, Craig. As I used to wear a mask myself I always watch the catcher's work, and you certainly played a nice game. Are you catching to-day?"

"Yes, sir. At least, I'm going to start the game."

"How's your pitcher?"

"Fairly good for a youngster," said Mr. Gifford. "Porter's only fifteen, I believe."

"You don't say?" The speaker turned, with a laugh, to Mr. Williams. "You'll have to watch out, Williams, and not let the kid outpitch you."

The councillor looked a bit dismayed. "Perhaps we ought to let one of the boys pitch," he said doubtfully. "It doesn't seem quite a fair

thing. We thought, Mr. Langham, that probably one of your councillors would pitch for you."

"Don't let that worry you," replied the Chief. "We have Mr. Gifford here to step into the breach if he's needed. Porter's a pretty clever pitcher if he *is* young. By the way, what time do we start, Scovill?"

"Three o'clock. It will be a little cooler by then. Besides, it gives a chance for the Greenwood boys to get over here. There's another camp on the other side of the mountain, Langham. We had a sort of a date to play with them to-day, but they were quite satisfied to postpone it."

"Why, I'm sorry! I didn't know we were interfering with——"

"Not a bit! Not a bit! Greenwood's just as well pleased to come over and look on to-day. It takes them nearly an hour to hike around here, and that's one reason I thought we'd wait until three." He looked at his watch. "They ought to be showing up pretty soon now. I suppose your boys will want to do a little practising before the game. Any time they'd like to go down to the field I'll send someone along to show them the way."

Mr. Gifford consulted his watch in turn. "It's twenty past two," he said. "Perhaps we'd better go now, Mr. Scovill. I'd like them to put in about twenty minutes or so to limber up."

"Certainly. Joe, you show Mr. Gifford the way, will you?"

Mr. Phillips assented with alacrity and Mr. Gifford, Sam, and Steve went off to get into their togs and gather the players together. When they had left, Mr. York said: "A born ball-player, that young Craig. I'll be glad to see him in action again. It's funny about catchers. Their job is the pivotal one on the team and yet they don't get half the credit they deserve. I suppose the average fan will tell you what every man on the team did in a game before he will mention the catcher's work at all. There's not very much chance for spectacular stunts behind the plate, and I guess that's why the catcher doesn't get in the spotlight more. Just the same, if I had to build up a ball team I'd start in by finding a good catcher—if I could. There aren't so many of them, by jingo! And then I'd build up the team around that catcher. Someone ought to grab Craig about now and take him in hand. A man

who knew how could make a fine backstop of that fellow!"

"Why don't you try it?" asked Mr. Scovill, with a laugh.

"Not a bad idea," replied Mr. York soberly. "At least, I might put someone onto him. I wouldn't mind seeing him playing with Warner in a year or two. Happen to know, Mr. Langham, whether he has his college picked out?"

"No, I don't. But"—and here Mr. Langham's eye twinkled—"there are three loyal Burton men at my camp, and——"

"Help!" laughed Mr. York. "Nuf ced! Still, if he did manage to escape you chaps I'd like a chance at him. Suppose we walk down and see them practise."

Mr. Langham remained behind with Mr. Scovill, at the latter's request, to meet the Greenwood party who were just then coming into sight up the road, while one of the councillors was despatched to the kitchen to see about a supply of lemonade which Mr. Scovill had ordered to be prepared and taken to the ball-ground. When Mr. York and his companions reached the field the visiting players had just started their prac-

tice and the audience had already begun to assemble. The field was a fine, level expanse of close turf about an eighth of a mile from the camp, reached by a well-worn path through the woods. The foul-lines and boxes had been freshly marked out in honour of the event and the lime shone dazzingly in the sunlight. By degrees The Wigwam boys gathered together at the farther side of the diamond, making themselves comfortable on the warm grass. Mr. Gifford and Steve Brown were batting to infielders and outfielders respectively, and Sam was at the plate, feeding the balls to Mr. Gifford. The fellows went at practice with plenty of snap and the ball fairly flew about the bases. At ten minutes to three the visitors yielded the field to the home team and at a few minutes past the hour Mr. York called, "Play ball!"

## CHAPTER XIII

### OUT AT THIRD!

Had you looked over Will Temple's shoulder you'd have seen, very neatly set down in his score-book—a brand-new one for the occasion—the following batting orders of the rival camps:

The Wigwam—Brown, 2b.; Thursby, ss.; Meldrum, rf.; Gifford, lf.; Groom, cf.; Crossbush, 3b.; Murdock, 1b.; Craig, c.; Porter, p.

Mount Placid—Cochran, 1b.; Benson, ss.; Smith, lf.; Walters, cf.; Connell, 3b.; Phillips, 2b.; Hanford, c.; Williams, p.; Cather, rf.

At the last moment The Wigwam had thought it best to put its full strength in the field at the start, and so it was decided that Mr. Gifford should take Peterson's place in left. In that way the line-up would contain the best batting talent. In arranging the order of batting Mr. Gifford started out on the assumption that Steve Brown was the fastest man on bases and that, once on first, he would be able to advance without aid.

Consequently, Ed Thursby was to follow him, since Ed, although not a hard hitter, was a fast runner between bags. Meldrum was as good a bunter as the team possessed, and Mr. Gifford was placed fourth in the hope that he would be able to score one or more of the preceding players. Groom and Crossbush were fair hitters, while Murdock was rather weak. Sam was to follow the latter and, if possible, clean up. Porter was the weak man at bat.

Of the Mount Placid team, Cochran, Connell, Phillips, and Williams were councillors, although, as The Wigwam learned afterwards, only Cochran and Williams were players of experience.

Both teams showed nervousness in the first inning or two and the play was rather ragged. The Mount Placid fellows were at least a year older than their rivals, all being, probably, over sixteen, while the visiting boys were all under that age, with one, Ralph Murdock, only fourteen. Along the base-lines was assembled quite a good-sized audience, representing Mount Placid, Greenwood, and The Wigwam. Naturally enough, the Greenwood fellows rooted for Mount Placid, and, so far as cheering was concerned, The Wigwam

was bested from the start. Mount Placid, bunched together some seventy strong behind the third base-line, chanted: "Rah, rah rah! Who are we? We are the boys of M. P. C.! Team! Team! Team!" Greenwood, nearby, gave less often her, "Greenwood! Greenwood! Greenwood! Rah, rah, rah! Rah rah, rah! Greenwood!" The Wigwam, still fewer in numbers, did its best under the leadership of Dick Barry, and its novel cheer, short and sharp, was applauded from across the diamond: "W! Rah! I! Rah! G! Rah, rah, rah! W! Rah! A! Rah! M! Rah, rah, rah! Wigwam!" In spite of the fact that there were only some thirty Wigwam supporters there, Dick Barry managed to get excellent results.

Steve Brown started the game by striking out, and Thursby and Meldrum were thrown out at first. Mount Placid fared no better at bat. Cochran flied to Mr. Gifford, Benson struck out, and Smith made the third, Crossbush to Murdock. No runs, and, so far, no errors. But the second inning told a different tale. Mr. Gifford flied out to left field and Groom fell victim to Mr. Williams's slow ball. And then, with two gone, the Mount Placid third baseman fumbled an easy attempt of Tom

Crossbush's and that youth reached first. Murdock received an in-shoot on the elbow and took his base, briskly rubbing his arm. Then Sam, cheered hopefully by The Wigwam boys, lined one into deep centre and Crossbush reached the plate a yard ahead of the ball and scored the first tally. That gave the blue-shirted youths something to celebrate, and Dick Barry didn't let the opportunity get by them. A minute later, however, the inning was over, George Porter fanning.

There was no scoring in the last of the second and none in either half of the third. In the latter inning Mount Placid got to Porter for two singles, but no one went beyond third. In the fourth it looked for a while as if the visitors were going to score again, for, with one down, Crossbush singled sharply to left and went to second on Murdock's out, pitcher to first. Sam was again called on for a hit, but this time Mr. Williams fooled him badly and he struck out, and again Porter proved easy. Mount Placid filled the bases in their half, but George Porter, with one out, made Mr. Cochran hit into a double, and once more The Wigwam barked its cheer into the air.

The fifth began with the score still one to noth-

ing, and Steve Brown tried desperately to get a start. But the rival pitcher's skill was too much for Steve, and when, as a last resort, the latter got in the way of the ball the thing was so palpable that Mr. York laughingly shook his head and Mount Placid jeered good-naturedly. Thursby laid down a bunt in front of the plate, but he couldn't beat the throw to first. Meldrum made the third out, short to first. The Mount Placid shortstop, Benson, opened the inning for the home team with a slow bunt down third-base line that neither Crossbush nor Porter could field, and an instant later he stole second, being aided by a poor pitch of Porter's that Sam couldn't pick from between his feet in time to throw.

Mount Placid, and Greenwood too, was cheering lustily now, and the coachers were adding their turmoil to the total of sound. With two strikes and one ball on Smith, Porter let down and handed out a base. With a man on first and second, Walters flied out to Mr. Gifford, who held the runners. Then Mr. Connell, one of the councillors, and third baseman, found Porter for a long fly into right, which George Meldrum badly misjudged, and two runs trickled across. Mr. Connell took third on

the throw-in. Mr. Phillips scored him a minute later when he landed a Texas Leaguer behind first base. There was still but one out. Sam walked down and whispered to Porter. He had nothing to say to the pitcher, for George was pitching coolly and well, but he seemed to be planning all sorts of strategies, and The Wigwam cheered and the rivals indulged in the usual humourous remarks held sacred to such occasions: "That's right, talk it over!" "Let's all hear it!" "I'll bet it's a good story!" "They're changing the signals. It's all up now!" "Play ball, Wigwam! Tell him about it afterwards!"

Mr. York cautioned Sam that he was taking too much time, and Sam, nodding untroubledly, donned his mask again and stooped behind Hanford, the Mount Placid catcher. Hanford liked a low ball and Sam saw that he didn't get one. A strike, breast-high, went over. Then an out-shoot that might have been a strike or ball, and was judged by the umpire as the latter. Then another ball, much too high. Then a waister, that the batter struck at and missed, was followed by a foul. Sam, pulling his mask down again, laid one finger against the back of his big mitt. Porter

rubbed the back of his head reflectively and, had anyone been regarding Steve Brown attentively, he would have seen that player turn slightly toward second base. Then Porter stepped forward and the ball whizzed to the plate. It was one of George's fast, straight ones, and, while it actually crossed the centre of the plate lower than Sam wanted it to, it did the business. Hanford swung too late and missed it by inches. It thumped into Sam's glove, was plucked forth instantly and sent, fast and true, to second. Steve was already awaiting it. Almost with one motion he caught the throw, knee-high, and swept the ball to the left. Mr. Phillips, sliding feet-first, was out by a yard! And some thirty blue-shirted youths cheered and capered!

But Mount Placid had a two-run lead now and The Wigwam tried hard to cut it down in the first half of the sixth. Mr. Gifford landed on a straight ball and hit safely for two bases into far left. Then Joe Groom fouled out to first baseman. Crossbush fanned. With two out the inning seemed over, but when Murdock knocked a slow grounder across to third baseman that youth, pausing to hold the runner at second, threw wide

to first and Murdock was safe. When, however, a double steal was called for a few moments later, Hanford proved too much for the success of the venture. Although Sam swung at the ball, the Mount Placid catcher side-stepped quickly and plugged to third. The decision was a close one and Sam looked sorrowfully at Mr. York when the latter waved Mr. Gifford out. Mount Placid, too, failed to get a runner across in that inning and the seventh started with the score still 3 to 1.

Sam was up, having been left at bat in the sixth, and Sam wanted desperately to start something! But Mr. Williams had a slow ball that he didn't at all like. Twice Sam tried for it and each time hit too soon. The first result was a foul that third baseman narrowly missed and the second a mighty swipe through empty air and a loud and disgusted grunt from Sam. After that, with two strikes and one ball against him, Sam let two more go by and things looked brighter. The next delivery was palpably bad and Sam, dropping his bat, trotted to first amidst the acclaim of The Wigwam boys, wishing that he had Steve's ability to purloin bases!

As it turned out, however, Sam was not called

on to steal. Mr. Williams at once set about trying to catch him off his base. He apparently resented that youth's luck, and, as Sam thought, even showed some temper in the vindictive way in which he slammed the ball across to Mr. Cochran. Sam each time took as much of a lead as he dared, more than willing that the pitcher should throw across. Five times Mr. Williams attempted to surprise Sam and five times he failed, but always by so narrow a margin that he was encouraged to try it again. Then the pitcher disgustedly turned his attention to Porter, who was impatiently waiting at the plate, and Sam, watching for a signal, poised himself on his toes.

The first ball pitched was too good to refuse and Porter leaned against it. Off it travelled, straight between first and second, and Sam, racing for the next base, had to leap aside to avoid it. It was too fast for handling by the infielders, although second baseman made a gallant attempt, and Sam reached third well ahead of the throw, while George Porter, a much surprised youth, perched himself on second. A minute later he was sent to second and stole handily, Hanford being unwilling to risk a throw-down for fear that Sam would

score. The Wigwam supporters were now making enough noise for twice their number, and even Mr. Haskins was seen shouting himself red in the face. Steve, who had sacrificed a strike when Porter had gone to second, now tried hard to find something he could hit. But Mr. Williams, after one attempt to catch Porter at second, settled down again and disposed of Steve with four deliveries, and there was one gone. Ed Thursby tried bravely to bring in a run, but only succeeded in making the next out, second to first. Meldrum was next in order, but Mr. Gifford, trusting to the psychological effect of introducing a pinch-hitter called him back and sent Pete Simpson in to bat for him. Simpson was no more of a hitter than Meldrum, but that was something the opponents couldn't know. Nor did they know the new player's batting weakness as they now knew Meldrum's. Pete was a small youth, rather stocky, and only fourteen years of age, and he didn't look especially formidable as he walked to the plate and, with a somewhat nervous smile which he strove to make appear confident, swung his bat invitingly. Hanford experimented with a low ball which Pete disdained and which went for a

strike. Then came a slow one and Mr. York called "Ball!" Pete knew what he wanted, but Hanford hadn't yet discovered it. As a matter of fact, what Pete was wishing for was a plain, every-day waister in the groove, which was about the only sort of a ball he could hit! It didn't look as though he was to get one, though, for after teasing him with another slow one which was just too wide of the plate to be a strike, Mr. Williams curved one over the outer corner and the umpire announced "Strike two!"

"It only takes one, Pete!" called Tom Crossbush from the bench. "Make him pitch to you!"

Then Mr. Williams slipped a cog and what was meant for a straight, slow ball went past well over Steve's shoulder and a howl of delight went up from the bench.

"He's got to put it over now!" called Mr. Gifford. "Just tap it, Pete!"

Hanford glanced a bit nervously toward where Sam was taking a ten-foot lead off third. Suddenly the Mount Placid catcher became alarmed. A hit meant two runs and a tied score! Beckoning to Mr. Williams, he advanced halfway toward the

box and the two consulted. This was the visitors' chance to jibe and they took advantage of it.

"You've got them worried, Pete!" "Up in the air, fellows! Here's where we tie it up!" "Play ball! Play ball!"

The coachers added their contributions, while Sam, dancing about at third, seriously interfered with the conversation between Mr. Williams and Hanford by threatening to steal home every instant. Finally the Mount Placid battery returned to their places and Hanford knelt and gave his signal, or pretended to. What followed was a pitch-out, a quick peg to the pitcher by Hanford and an equally speedy throw to third, and Sam, two yards from base, was caught flat-footed for the third out!

## CHAPTER XIV

### TIED IN THE EIGHTH

The Wigwam was quiet and disappointed while the teams changed places. From across the diamond came the applauding cheers of the enemy. Sam, thoroughly disgusted with himself, donned protector and mask in grim silence. Joe Groom, who had been coaching at third, generously strove to take the blame.

"That was my fault, sir! I ought to have known they were up to some silly trick!"

"No one's fault but mine," replied Sam decisively. "I played it like an idiot!"

Benson went to bat for the home team in the last of the seventh and cracked out a two-bagger over shortstop and was caught off second a minute or two later by a quick return from Sam to Porter, who whirled instantly and pegged to Thursby. The Wigwam recovered from its gloom and cheered. Then the Mount Placid left fielder fouled out to Sam and two were gone. But the

inning was not yet over, for Walters, a thin, freckled-faced youth with extraordinarily long legs, took it into his head to bunt, after once trying to knock the cover off the ball, and caught Crossbush napping. By the time Tom had gathered in the rolling ball and sent it to first Walters was making the turn. Mr. Connell was up next, and, profiting by Walters' example, he laid the sphere down a few feet from the plate and lit out for the base like a runaway horse. By the time Sam had dashed his mask aside, got the ball and pegged to Murdock, the runner was safe and Walters was on second, and the grey shirts and the green shirts were shouting madly.

Mr. Phillips, the next batter, had one hit to his credit and, as Sam had discovered, liked a low ball. So Porter fed him high ones and got two strikes and one ball on his. Then came a foul and a second strike. Porter wasted one then and the score was two and two. Sam called for a fast one and Porter tried it. Unfortunately, Mr. Phillips outguessed him and when the ball came along he met it squarely for a long fly into left. Mr. Gifford was after it like a shot, but he had to run back a dozen yards and when he finally got his hand on

it he failed to hold it. The best he could do was to recover quickly and throw to third in time to hold the second runner there. Walters scored and the game stood 4 to 1. With runners on second and third, things still looked dubious for The Wigwam, and Porter made them more so by utterly failing to locate the plate with the first three deliveries! Hanford, who was up, swung his bat and stepped back and forth in the box. Sam signalled a straight ball and got it for a strike. Hanford let it go past unchallenged, for he had two more chances and was waiting for the last one. Again Porter essayed a fast one in the groove, but this time he failed and Mr. York waved Hanford to first. The bases filled, Mount Placid cheered exultantly and the grey-shirted coachers danced and yelped; and the base-runners too did their level best to rattle the pitcher.

Mr. Williams was at bat now and Sam had what he would have called a "hunch" to the effect that Mr. Williams was dangerous at this stage of affairs. While Porter sent the first delivery in, a curve that failed to win approval from Mr. York, Sam studied the runners on the bases. At third, Walters was taking a good lead on the wind-up,

but hugging the bag safely at other times. On second Mr. Connell was watching the baseman carefully in spite of his seeming recklessness. At first, though, Hanford, feeling safe from attack, was leading a good twelve feet. Sam tossed the ball back to Porter.

"Keep after him, George!" he called. Then he stooped, dropped his mitt between his knees, and gave the signal. But it was a closed fist that Porter saw, and that called for a throw-out. Porter walked to the side of the box, picked up an imaginary pebble and tossed it away. Then he tugged at his cap, wound up and sped the ball four feet wide of the batsman and straight into Sam's waiting mitt. One step forward toward first, a quick throw, and the trick was won! Frantic shouts of warning from coachers, a desperate slide to the bag by Hanford, a scurry for the plate by Walters! But Murdock had been ready. At the instant the ball had settled in Sam's mitt he had run toward the bag. The throw was perfect and Murdock caught it, fell to one knee and let Hanford slide into the ball as he tried for safety!

The shouts of delight came from the third-base

side of the field, for across the diamond a dense silence reigned. Sam and Ralph Murdock received an ovation as they returned to the bench. Mr. Gifford slapped Sam on the back and many of the boys would have followed suit had they dared. Pandemonium reigned until Mr. York called, "Batter up, please!" When Sam, passing the plate to reach the coacher's box at first, went by him the umpire smiled as he said softly: "Quick work, Craig!"

Four to one now and only two innings left! The Wigwam realised the fact that if the game was to be pulled out of the fire, and they had by no means given up hope yet, something must be done now, that it wouldn't do to count on a ninth-inning rally. And so they went at the task very determinedly, very carefully. Mr. Gifford, the first man up, showed no eagerness to hit. Instead he allowed Mr. Wil
over be
swung
Mr. Wil
batter re
the hole.
wound up

slow balls. But Mr. Gifford had profited by experience, and guessed what was coming. The result was that he hit slowly and caught the offering fairly a foot from the end of his bat and the ball went arching gaily and gracefully into centre field and Mr. Gifford went speeding quite as gaily —if not so gracefully—to first base. That hit, for it was a hit, landed untouched between centre fielder and shortstop, with second baseman just out of the running. It was the fielder who scooped up the rolling ball and set himself for the throw to second. Unfortunately for him, however, second base was for the moment uncovered. Mr. Williams and Mr. Gifford arrived there simultaneously an instant later, but by that time the centre fielder saw no reason for throwing!

That was a fine opening for the inning, and no mistake! And The Wigwam jumped and shouted

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mined, but only succeeded in flying out to short-stop. Tom Crossbush managed to reach first on a scratch-hit past third baseman. Murdock struck out miserably. The Wigwam's hopes began to dim. But with Sam up something might yet happen to their liking, and so they cheered him encouragingly and held their breaths while Mr. Williams did his utmost to put him out of the way.

A strike—a ball—another ball, by a scant margin—a foul-strike! Sam watched and waited, gripping his bat tightly, and looking as cool as if the outcome of the game might not depend on the next delivery. Perhaps Sam's confidence affected Mr. Williams. At least it is probable that the Mount Placid pitcher never intended to send across just what he did, for the ball came up to Sam with nothing on it but the cover and Sam smote it lustily and thirty-odd youths sprang into the air and shrieked deliriously!

Around the bases sped Mr. Gifford, his flannel trousers a grey streak above the turf, and behind him came Tom Crossbush. Off for first leaped Sam, while, far out in right field, the ball was leisurely descending to earth. Right fielder was sprinting desperately toward the fence that en-

closed the ground on that side. If only, prayed the Wigwam supporters, that ball would land on the other side! But it didn't. It came down a dozen feet inside the boundary, and Cather, with a final plucky spurt, shot his hand into the air and—well, then fielder and ball went down together and rolled over! There was one breathless instant of uncertainty, broken by the triumphant yells of The Wigwam when Cather, scrambling to his feet, searched the turf hurriedly, recovered the ball and made a wretched throw to second baseman. At that moment Mr. Gifford was trotting across the plate, Tom Crossbush was past third, and Sam was rounding second. Second baseman sped the ball home, but too late to catch Tom, and Hanford desperately pegged it to third. But Sam reached the bag just as the ball did and had one scuffed shoe snuggled against it when Mr. Connell tagged him none too gently.

Four to three now! Only one run needed to tie! Two out, but a man on third! If only Porter could make good! Mr. Gifford consulted Thursby and The Wigwam waited anxiously. Then a cheer went up, for Peterson was off the bench and pawing at the bats! Porter was coming out! Peter-

son was to bat for him! A hit would tie the game!

Dan Peterson received a veritable ovation as he hurried to the plate. He was loudly invited to contribute a hit, a two-bagger, a home run! To bust it! To tear the cover off! To—to——

Then quiet returned, or, rather, comparative quiet, for the coachers had no intention of letting up on their babel. From back of first base Joe Groom shouted at the top of his lungs to Sam on third, and back of Sam Mr. Gifford clapped his hands and added to the noise. And then Mr. Williams brought down upon himself ridicule and wrath by deliberately passing Peterson! The Wigwam was incensed indeed! Mount Placid and Greenwood, however, laughed and applauded, and Peterson, deprived of the chance to distinguish himself as a pinch-hitter, scowled darkly at Mr. Williams as he walked unwillingly to base.

Steve Brown was up then, and Steve had played in hard luck all day. Not once had he been able to get to first. This rankled in Steve's breast, and as he faced the Mount Placid pitcher he resolved that this time, his last opportunity, he would not be foiled! On the first ball pitched Peterson

legged it for second and Sam danced forward halfway along the base line toward home. But Hanford knew better than to risk a throw to second and contented himself with a motion that sent Sam scuttling back to third. Steve had offered at the delivery and so had one strike on him. To bring in a run he must hit safely and Steve waited his chance. But before it came something happened.

On second Peterson, perhaps disgruntled at the trick worked on him, was set on showing his contempt for the enemy by risking a lead that simply cried for punishment. On each wind-up he went fully half the distance to third. Now Hanford was canny enough, but that was too great a temptation for him to resist. And so he gave a signal, Mr. Williams turned quickly, stepped out and shot the ball to shortstop. Peterson was twelve feet off base and there was but one thing to do and that was to keep away from the ball long enough for Sam to score. So he set out toward third and Sam looked on and watched his chance. It came when shortstop tossed the ball over Peterson's head to third baseman. Then Sam set out desperately. And that, of course, was what Hanford wanted. Third baseman turned and pegged

to the plate while Sam was still ten feet away. But, alas for Hanford's hopes! The ball slammed into the dust and, although he tried desperately to get it, he failed, and while he was still groping for it with one hand and striving to block off Sam with his body that youth slid to safety in a cloud of red dust and Peterson romped to third!

Mount Placid listened gloomily to the visitors' wild outpouring of joy, saw them drag the runner to his feet and pull him ecstatically to the bench, saw Hanford, rather pale and wrathful, slap the dust from his clothes, recover his mask, and dispiritedly send the ball back to Mr. Williams; saw, too, Mr. Connell on third trying his best to look as if he didn't know he had thrown the game away!

"W! Rah! I! Rah! G! Rah, rah, rah! W! Rah! A! Rah! M! Rah, rah, rah! Wigwam! Wigwam!! Wigwa-a-arm!!!" And Dick Barry cavorting about like a thing built of springs, waving his arms and kicking his legs and shouting his voice away! And the score 4 to 4, and everyone on the third base side very, very happy and noisy!

And then, after a minute, when one more run might have given the visitors the victory, when

Steve had still another strike to be scored against him, Peterson, made careless by his previous good fortune, took just that extra inch forbidden by safety—and the coacher—and slid back to the bag too late!

That was disappointing, but there was another inning, and if only they could keep Mount Placid from adding to her score; and could themselves put just one other little tally across——

And so Mount Placid went to bat for her half of the eighth looking firmly resolved to do or die, and Mr. Gifford, pulling a pitcher's glove on, stepped into the box to do his best. Peterson took the councillor's place in left field, Peterson rather chastened in spirit now. Mr. Williams, first batter, was an easy victim to the infield, going out at first, Steve to Murdock, and Cather followed him, the assist going to Tom Crossbush. That brought the head of the Mount Placid list up, and Mr. Cochran had a fearsome glint in his eye as he faced the substitute pitcher. Mr. Gifford's offerings were not very baffling and the rival first baseman landed on the second delivery and sent it speeding down the alley between shortstop and third. One base was all he got, however, for Joe

Groom, running in like a streak, fielded prettily to second. Then Benson followed with a hit past third and Mount Placid had runners on first and second. But the danger was over a moment later when Smith, lifting a long fly to the outfield, saw it settle cosily into Simpson's hands.

Then it was the ninth, with Steve Brown up and only one run needed. Steve and Mr. Gifford and Ed Thursby consulted a minute ere Steve stepped to the plate. "You've got to get your base somehow, Steve," said Mr. Gifford. "Think you can hit him?" Steve looked doubtful.

"I'm going to make an awful try," he said grimly.

"Maybe if you can get him in a hole——" began Ed.

"Bunt," said Mr. Gifford. "That's your best chance. Swing like fury on one and then watch for a good one and just hold your bat in front of it. If you connect, run like the dickens, Steve!"

"If I should get to first don't you sacrifice, Ed. Make the bluff, but don't swing. That fellow Hanford's slow on throwing-down and I can beat him easily."

"Batter up!" called Mr. York.

## CHAPTER XV

### STEVE SCORES

Mr. Williams motioned the infielders in and Steve's hopes dropped. Evidently the pitcher was looking for an attempt at a bunt. At all events, Steve's chance of "getting away with it," as he mentally phrased it, seemed pretty slim. He wished he could manage to lay against the ball just hard enough to carry it out of the diamond, since, with the infielders all inside the base lines, a short, low fly would be the safest sort of a hit. But it was soon evident that Mr. Williams had no idea of letting him so much as touch that ball! The Mount Placid pitcher was never more deliberate or careful. The first offering went as a ball and the second looked low, but was called a strike by Mr. York. Mr. Gifford and Sam were shouting encouragingly. "Hit it out, Steve!" "Choose your alley!" "All the way 'round this time, Steve!" Mr. Williams studied the catcher's signal very attentively, hesitated, shook his head,

looked again, nodded, wound up, and pitched. The ball broke to the right and Steve stepped warily back only to realise the next instant that the sphere had crossed the inner corner of the plate and to hear the umpire fatefully announce, "Strike—two!"

Steve glared wrathfully at the pitcher as that gentleman again settled the ball between his fingers, and tried to guess what the next one was to be. With two strikes against him, it was probable that Mr. Williams would waste one, but Steve wasn't certain and so, when the dirty-white sphere again shot toward him, he glued his eyes to it and in the scant moment of time that elapsed tried his hardest to judge it. Then he brought his bat around, there was a slight tingle in his hands and he was sprinting toward first. But luck was still against him, for the discouraging cry of "Foul!" caught him halfway along the path, and he turned back, picked up his bat, and again faced the pitcher. Steve was hopeless now, and a little desperate. The absurd notion of striking at the next delivery, no matter what it might be, and so ending the suspense, came to him, and he dallied with it while Mr. Williams, slowly and

deliberately, wound-up, stepped forward, and shot the ball once more toward the plate. And then Steve found himself suddenly undecided, quite lost sight of the ball for an instant, found it again just as it came close, brought his bat around half-heartedly in a despairing effort which he was perfectly certain was a hopeless one, and then felt the shock of bat and ball, heard the sudden shriek that went up from behind him and, digging his toes into the dust, put his head down and raced!

That hit was the joke of the game. The ball would have crossed the outer corner of the plate at about a level with the top of Steve's shoes had he allowed it to. Hanford had dropped to his knees to get it, and whether Hanford or Steve was the more surprised is hard to say. The latter's ridiculous swing had, by some stroke of luck, caught the ball on the tip of the bat. There had been no force in the swing, Steve had even failed to grasp the stick firmly, but the result could have been no more satisfactory had he studied and worked for it, for that ball arose from almost in the dust and described a pretty arch over the pitcher's head and descended fifteen feet behind

the base line, and a little to the right of second. Second baseman tried for it desperately, and first baseman went to his assistance, but the hit was never in danger of being caught. Had the second baseman been playing his usual position he would only have had to step back a couple of yards and put his hand up to have caught it, but with that player well inside the diamond the ball was quite safe. And so was Steve, one toe poised on first base and a look of deep surprise on his countenance. Mr. Gifford was slapping him on the back and saying, for the sole benefit of the enemy: "No one out, Steve! Play it safe and look out for a double!"

At the plate Ed Thursby faced the pitcher and gave an excellent imitation of a man wanting to bunt. Steve took a six-foot lead. Mr. Williams turned. Steve slid back to base. The ball slapped into first baseman's mitt. The Wigwam scoffed loudly. Once more the pitcher tried, but Steve was like a cat for quickness. Mr. Williams turned his attention then to the batter and Steve edged further away and watched the wind-up and reckoned his chance. Ed Thursby showed how eager he was to hit by stepping almost on top of the

plate to get that delivery, and, apparently, only failing to swing because it was palpably a pitch-out. Hanford, getting the ball, recovered quickly and looked more than surprised when he saw that Steve had made no attempt to steal! One ball to Ed's credit then. Steve again took his lead and Mr. Williams studied him a moment in deep silence ere he turned back, took a short wind up and——

"*There he goes!*" shouted the first baseman.

Ed never even so much as offered at that ball, but you may be sure he didn't step out of the way! Hanford side-stepped, shot his arm back and then forward and off sailed the ball to second base. It reached there in a cloud of dust, and shortstop, covering base, made a brilliant catch and swung downward. But Steve had one foot hooked into the bag and was smiling sweetly as Mr. York, trotting by, spread his hands wide, palms downward. The Wigwam cheered and capered. Then Steve was up again, patting dust from his grey trousers and edging along the path toward third. Twice shortstop circled behind him to base, but Mr. Williams refused to throw. There was not in his estimation any danger of the run-

ner stealing third with no one out. Besides, he was already in difficulty with the batsman, for his second delivery had been far too high and the score was two balls and no strikes. Ed Thursby suddenly recovered from his fierce desire to hit. He stood idle while Mr. Williams put a fast ball over for a strike and while he tried to do it again and missed it by an inch or two. One-and-two, then, and Mr. Williams showing some discomfort, and the rival coachers making life hideous with their shouts. But the Mount Placid pitcher took plenty of time; cast a look toward Steve, dancing challengingly about on the base path, sent him hurrying back to second with a none too fast throw to the second baseman, got the ball back, fixed it between his fingers, and finally sent it in.

"Strike—two!" said Mr. York.

Ed only smiled. There was still another chance and this time the offering must be good. His glance shot across to Steve while the ball was returned. Whatever he did, he reflected, he must not put the ball into the infield where it could be played to third, for he knew perfectly well that Steve meant to steal on the next delivery. And

then the ball was coming and he set his body for it. And as it came bedlam was let loose!

"Third! Third! There he goes!" shrieked Mount Placid. For Steve was off with the wind-up, his legs fairly twinkling along the path. Around came Ed's bat, the ball thumped into Hanford's glove and, an instant later, flew through the air to third. But once more Steve had stolen cleanly, ending his sprint with a ten-foot fall-away slide! And again The Wigwam jubilated riotously! Ed Thursby, trailing his bat back to the pile, reflected that even if he had been ingloriously struck out the day was not yet lost.

Simpson had his instructions to bunt, if he could, along the first-base line. Mr. Williams again signalled the infield to close in toward the plate, for they must play for the man on third no matter what became of the batter. Simpson tried hard to carry out instructions, missed one strike, fouled off a second and, finally, with two strikes and two balls on him, actually bumped the sphere across the diamond in a very good imitation of a hit. But it was an imitation only and he would have been an easy out had not Benson, the oppos-

ing shortstop, delayed too long to throw to first. Benson was so sure that the runner on third was putting out for home that it took him several valuable moments to convince himself that that player was actually only ten feet from base. By that time Simpson, who could run if he couldn't bat much, was almost at the bag, and Benson's desperate peg failed to get him.

Mount Placid showed signs of nervousness now. Mr. Gifford went to bat. On the first pitch Simpson scuttled to second. Hanford threw quickly to the box, but Steve was not to be fooled by so ancient a trick and trotted back to third. There was no necessity for taking risks, anyway, for there was but one down and any sort of a hit or a long sacrifice fly would score him. But five minutes later the outlook was darker, for Mr. Gifford, in spite of all his efforts, only managed at last to hit straight at the box. Mr. Williams knocked the ball down, held Steve at third, and tossed out the runner. The Wigwam, almost pale with excitement, groaned and cheered together. The rivals across the diamond found cause for rejoicing and shouted encouragingly.

Joe Groom picked out a bat and faced the

pitcher, scowling intently. At second Simpson took a long lead, but watched the ball closely. On third Steve had grown suddenly shy and hugged the bag until the ball was in the air. But the coachers kept up their din and the infield still played short-field and Mr. Williams looked a little bit anxious. The first offer was a straight ball right across the plate and Joe Groom frowned. The next was wide and evened the score. Then a curve fooled Joe completely and his vicious swing at it passed harmlessly by.

"Two-and-one!" called Hanford hoarsely. "Let's have him now!"

Mr. Williams smiled grimly, began his wind-up and—faltered! For there, running like a grey-legged rabbit along the path, sped Steve! Mr. Williams recovered quickly, stepped forward and shot the ball to Hanford. Some two hundred voices shrieked together. Joe Groom held his place grimly, his eyes fixed on the ball, his bat poised. But there was no need of offering, for that one instant of hesitation had done the business. The ball, sent away as an out-curve, broke wildly, and although Hanford, dropping to his knees, threw himself in the way of it, it trickled

And above the din and through the red dust-cloud sounded Mr. York's voice, *"He's out!"*

past, and Steve, sliding to the plate in a maelstrom of dust, had scored!

Joe and half a dozen others lifted him to his feet. Above the outburst of joy from the third-base side of the diamond could be heard Mr. Gifford's reiterated ejaculation of "You old thief! You old thief!" Off to the bench they hustled him, shaking his hand, thumping his back. Down at first base Ed Thursby was trying hard to stand on his head and wave his legs. Behind third Sam was absolutely grinning!

And then, order restored again, Joe Groom stood idly by and watched Mr. Williams put two balls past, and then walked to first.

"Let's have a couple more!" shouted Thursby. "We've got 'em going, fellows! Let's——"

But the rest was drowned in the cheer that Dick Barry was leading. But, although Ed took second unchallenged on a passed ball, Tom Crossbush failed to deliver the required hit, popping a miserable little foul to Hanford, and the side was out.

Five to four was the score now, and "Hold 'em!" pleaded The Wigwam supporters. "Hold 'em!"

Walters, Connell, and Phillips were up for Mount Placid in that last of the ninth, and Mr. Gifford was a victim to dire forebodings as he stepped into the pitcher's box. Nothing he possessed, he felt sure, would deceive the two councillors, and so it was up to the fielders to hold the game safe. Walters was far too anxious and nervous and put himself to the bad at once by fouling the first two deliveries. Then, growing cautious, he misjudged the next ball and stepped aside.

"One gone!" called Sam. "Here's the next victim, Andy!"

But Mr. Connell was not so easy. He lighted on Mr. Gifford's second offering and poked it well into left for two bases, to the great joy of Mount Placid. A hit now would tie the game again. Sam called for high ones and Mr. Gifford tried his best to send them in that way. But he didn't always succeed, and with one strike and two balls he unfortunately gave Mr. Phillips just what that gentleman fancied. There was a sharp *crack* and off into short right sped the ball. On second Mr. Connell poised himself to start the instant the ball landed. And start he did, and run

he did! Down came the ball into Simpson's glove after that youth had run halfway to the infield, and Simpson, putting on brakes, made the throw that saved the day. Sam, astride the plate, hands outstretched, waited anxiously. Along the path from third raced the ambitious Mr. Connell. The air was filled with unintelligible cries and noises. Then the ball struck the sod well in front of the plate, bounded straight and thudded into Sam's hands, and Sam, dropping to his left knee, thrust it against Mr. Connell's oncoming foot, toppled over on the runner, rolled over and aside and held a hand aloft, the ball still firmly clasped!

And above the din and through the red dust-cloud sounded Mr. York's voice, "*He's out!*"

## CHAPTER XVI

### KIDNAPPED

"WHAT's the matter?" asked Steve Brown, as, helping Sam to his feet, he heard the latter groan.

"I twisted my knee," muttered Sam, testing his right leg and flinching as he put his weight on it. "Threw it out of joint, I guess, when he slid into me. It will be all right in a minute."

"Here, come over to the bench and sit down. I'll rub it for you. Hold on, fellows! Mr. Craig's hurt his knee. Don't crowd around, please."

"What's that?" demanded Mr. Langham's voice. "Sam Craig hurt?" The Chief pushed his way to the bench where Steve was already briskly massaging the injured limb. "Anything broken, Sam?" he asked anxiously.

"No, sir, not a thing. I just slipped my knee out of place and it's sort of sore. It will be all right in a minute, I think."

"Better come up to the camp," said Mr. Scovill, who had followed Mr. Langham. "We can

help you up there and then you can get your things off and put some cold water on it. You can hobble up if we give you a lift, can't you?"

"Yes, sir, thanks. Don't bother, please. It's all right. Did anyone pick up my mask?"

"I got it," said Tom Crossbush. "I don't know what became of the ball, though. Did you drop it, Mr. Craig?"

Sam smiled a little and held out one hand, and the others laughed, for there was the battered ball, very tightly clenched. Sam yielded it then, allowed Steve to unbuckle his protector and, between Steve and Mr. Gifford, followed the throng up the hill. Mount Placid had cheered The Wigwam and The Wigwam had cheered its defeated host; and Greenwood had impartially cheered both. And now, talking excitedly, explaining, laughing, the boys were climbing the path to camp. Mr. York joined the "ambulance corps," as he called it, and expressed regrets for Sam's injury.

"I know what it's like," he said as he walked alongside. "I used to have a way of putting my wrist out of joint every little while when I was a youngster, and I still remember just how nasty it felt when it slipped into place again and how sore

the muscles used to be afterwards. A cold compress is what you want, Craig, and then, to-morrow, a good rubbing with liniment. Better not try to walk on it for a day or so, though."

"I'm afraid I'll have to," responded Sam cheerfully. "You see, we're going on to-morrow morning, Mr. York. Going to hike back to Indian Lake."

"I guess you won't do much hiking," was the reply.

"Certainly not," confirmed Mr. Langham. "We'll put it off a day. That is——" He stopped and frowned. "Well, we'll talk about it later."

"I think I'll be all right by morning, Chief," said Sam.

"We'll see, we'll see, Sam. Mr. York, I want to thank you, sir, for the service you performed for us. It was very kind of you, very kind indeed. And I don't believe anyone could have umpired more—er—more impartially, sir."

"Oh, I enjoyed it," answered Mr. York, with a jovial laugh. "You couldn't have kept me away if you'd tried. By the way, Mr. Langham——"

The two dropped behind and remained in conversation until the camp was reached. Sam was

taken over to the dormitory where the visitors were to sleep and, Steve and Mr. Langham assisting, got out of his clothes and had a wet bandage wrapped around his knee. The knee was swollen and lame, and Mr. Gifford shook his head over it.

"It will feel a lot better to-morrow, Sam," he said, "but you'll not be able to do much walking inside of a couple of days, I'm afraid."

"I'll make out somehow," replied Sam. "You needn't think you're going to do me out of my fun."

"A lot of fun you'd have," said Steve grimly. "Best thing for you to do is to stay right here for another day and then catch up with us by train. We won't make more than fifteen miles to-morrow, I guess."

"Well, if it isn't all right, I suppose I'll have to," answered Sam regretfully. "I don't quite see how I managed to do such a fool stunt."

"The Chief said something about waiting another day," remarked Mr. Gifford, "but I'm afraid he can't do that. In the first place, we're putting a lot of these chaps out of their beds—some of them are sleeping on the floor in the other dormitories; and in the second place, if we're to

get back in time to get ready for Visitors' Day we can't afford to lose much time."

"I wouldn't want him to wait on my account," said Sam. "If I can't go with you to-morrow I'll catch up the next day. Hang the luck, anyway!"

"Never mind," said Steve soothingly. "You made a peach of a catch, Sam, and we beat 'em!" Just then Mr. Collins and Mr. Williams entered to tell Sam how sorry they were, Mr. Collins expressing the fear that the injury was his fault.

"I'm afraid I went into you pretty hard," he said. "Awfully sorry. About all I was thinking of was beating out that ball!"

"It wasn't any fault of yours, sir," Sam assured him. "Somehow in trying to get the ball on you I gave my leg a twist. I—I'm sorry we couldn't both win that game."

"That's all right. The Chief has promised to take us down to call on you fellows next summer. Then look out for us!"

"We'll be mighty glad to see you," said Mr. Gifford. "I'm afraid we can't treat you as handsomely as you have us, Mr. Collins, but we'll do our best; even to beating you again, if possible!"

"We'll see about that," Mr. Williams laughed.

"You chaps certainly played a good game, though, and you deserved to win. Mr. Craig, you'd better stay right here with us until that knee's all right. We'll look after you finely."

"I heard the Chief say that Mr. York had invited Mr. Craig down to his place," said Mr. Collins. "You'd better go, Mr. Craig. He's got a mighty comfortable house down there and I guess he'd be able to give you rather a better bed than we can."

"Why, I—I guess I'd just as lief stay here," murmured Sam, "if you don't mind having me. I'm hoping, though, that I'll be all right tomorrow."

"Well, if you're not we'll be glad to have you stay here as long as you care to. I'll see that you have some supper sent over. And if there's anything else you can think of—How about having a doctor look at that knee, Mr. Gifford? There's one a couple of miles from here and I can get him on the 'phone in a minute."

"What do you say, Sam?" asked Mr. Gifford. Sam shook his head decisively.

"No, indeed, thanks! It's quite all right now. And I don't think you need to send my supper

here. I guess I can hobble over to the dining-hall without trouble."

"Better not try it," said Mr. Collins. "Rest up to-night and you'll feel better for it to-morrow."

So Sam made the best of it where he was. The knee ached dully, but didn't worry him much as long as he kept it quiet. Mr. Williams loaded him with magazines and papers and for an hour and more he lay there and read and listened to the sounds that came from outside. Now and then one of the boys would tiptoe in to express embarrassed regrets. He heard the cheers that were exchanged when Greenwood started back to camp, and, later, the sound of voices as The Wigwam boys trooped past to supper. Steve appeared a few minutes after that with a well-laden tray, and, when he had changed the bandage on the injured knee, helped Sam into a sitting position and placed the tray before him. Sam discovered that his appetite was excellent and that the supper, generous as it was, was none too much to satisfy it.

The light was too dim now to read by, so, setting the tray on the floor, he straightened out

and fell to thinking about things. He went over the afternoon's game again and, which was like him, viewed his own work critically and pointed out to himself the mistakes he had made. There was that time, for instance, when he had been caught flat-footed off third. Sam grunted disgustedly as he recalled the incident. Then, too, he had more than once failed to work the batter right. That bunt of Mr. Collins' in the sixth inning—or had it been the seventh?—should never have been allowed him. And then——

But at that moment there were voices outside and then footsteps on the porch and Mr. Langham and York came in. After inquiring about the knee, Mr. Langham said:

"Sam, Mr. York here wants to kidnap you."

Sam smiled a little doubtfully, inquiringly.

"Yes, Craig," said the second visitor, "I want to take you down to my place until you get ready to join your crowd. I've got lots of room down there; half a dozen bedrooms standing idle, in fact. Of course, Mr. Scovill will be glad to have you stay here if you'd rather, but I fancy you'll be a lot more comfortable with me. I've spoken to him about it and he says I can have you. And

Mr. Langham's agreed, too. Now what do you say?"

"Why—thank you very much," stammered Sam, "but I guess I won't bother you. I dare say that by morning this knee will be all right. I'd like to start with the others if I could, sir." The latter part of the remark was addressed to Mr. Langham.

"Of course, Sam, but it would be silly for you to try any walking just yet. You'd be so lame to-morrow night you might have to lie up longer than you will now. And I'm afraid there'd be no place to stay. You do just as you like about visiting Mr. York, but, in any case, don't consider going with us in the morning. I'd wait a day for you, but it would make us pretty late in getting home. You keep still for a day or two and then join us by train. I've written down the route here and our probable location the day after to-morrow and the day after that. If you shouldn't feel fit enough to join us before Monday, why, you come right back to camp. Maybe you'd better do that, anyhow, Sam, and not try walking."

"I'd rather do part of the trip with you, anyway, if I can, sir. And I should think that if

I kept quiet to-morrow I'd ought to be able to meet you the next day."

"Suit yourself. We'll be glad to see you when you come. Meanwhile, if I were you I'd accept Mr. York's offer. He's got his car here and I guess we can fix you so it won't hurt much."

"He's very kind," faltered Sam, not over-enthusiastically. Mr. York laughed.

"Don't come if you'd rather not, Craig," he said. "I only thought it would be easier for you and a pleasure for me. If you'd rather stay here, don't hesitate. I'll run up to-morrow and see how you are."

"It would be an awful bother for you, sir," said Sam.

"Not a bit of bother, old man! I'd be plaguey glad to have you. We could talk baseball to our heart's content. And there are one or two things I'd like to tell you about." Mr. Langham chuckled softly and Mr. York turned to him with a laugh. "Not that at all, Mr. Langham! Still, for that matter, you've given me the right of way."

"Oh, yes," replied the Chief, "there are no strings. But just remember what I predicted."

"I dare say you were right. And, anyway, I promise to play fair."

Sam looked puzzledly from one to the other. There was something here that he didn't understand.

"Well, what do you say, Craig?" asked Mr. York. "Going to come along and be company for me for a day or two?"

"Thank you, yes, sir, if you're quite sure——"

"Absolutely certain, old man! Now, where's your bag? And how about dressing? Not necessary, is it, Mr. Langham? A couple of blankets wrapped around him will do the trick, eh? All right! I'll bring the car up to the steps."

## CHAPTER XVII

### "GREYSIDES"

Sam opened his eyes sleepily and blinked about him. Near at hand a wide-open window, hung with blue-and-white chintz that swayed gently in the entering breeze, admitted a flood of sunlight. Beyond the window was a white bureau. The paper on the walls was grey with a tiny stripe made up of blue rosebuds. Sam closed his eyes again and wondered where he was. Then, stirring under the bedclothes, he experienced a dull, jarring ache in one knee, and suddenly recollection came to him and he opened his eyes more widely and stared around him.

Last night the room had been shadowed and dim, with only a little lamp on the white reading-stand beside the bed, and he had gone to sleep almost as soon as Mr. York and Steve had helped him between the cool, soft sheets. Now, in the early morning light, the room looked much larger,

and so bright and cheerful that it was a pleasure to just lie there and look about.

There were three windows on two sides of the spacious room, and through each of them, below the shade, Sam could see blue sky between the green branches of trees. On the reading-stand, beside the small lamp with its pale-blue shade, lay two magazines and a book and a glass tray that held a pitcher of water, a drinking-glass, and matches. The bed was enamelled white and over the footboard lay a dainty cream-white puff with blue poppies sprawling over it. Grey rag rugs with blue borders were spread here and there on the polished floor. Two wicker chairs, prettily cushioned in the prevailing colours, flanked a red brick fireplace in the middle of the further wall, and a straight-backed white-enamelled chair was half hidden under Sam's clothes. A table between two of the windows held his old-fashioned valise.

Sam sighed luxuriously and wondered what time it was. Not, however, that it mattered much, he supposed, for he had been told that he was not to get up this morning until he had had his breakfast and his knee had been rebandaged. He snuggled his head more comfortably in the

generous pillow, inadvertently moving his knee and grimacing as a result, and recalled last evening. The trip in Mr. York's roadster had occupied but a very few minutes, for which Sam had been very thankful, since, in spite of all the trouble they had taken to arrange him comfortably beside Mr. York, the jarring had set his knee thumping painfully. Steve had ridden on the running-board and had helped lift him in and out of the car. Sam remembered the big room into which they had entered from the twilight darkness, a room of dark woodwork and red hangings and cushions and many lamps which left the upper part of the room in pleasant and mysterious gloom. He hadn't been allowed to see much down there, though, for they had at once carried him up a broad flight of stairs and into this blue-and-white chamber, the like of which Sam had never viewed. He remembered saying good night to Steve and having his knee done up afresh in cool, wet cloths, and—well, not much after that. He must have gone to sleep almost the next instant!

Somewhere downstairs a clock struck in silvery tones. He counted. Five—six—seven—eight!

Eight o'clock! It couldn't be possible! He must have counted wrong. Why, he couldn't remember when he had lain in bed, much less slept, as late as that! He began to wonder uncomfortably if his injury could really be more serious than he had supposed, for with Sam only real illness excused staying in bed until such an hour. He lifted his head experimentally and turned it from side to side. It seemed to feel all right. And he couldn't detect any signs of fever. He had, of course, heard of folks being internally injured, but he didn't know what the symptoms would be, and so wasn't certain if he had them. He really felt remarkably well, except that his knee hurt if he moved it or flexed the muscles, and, on the whole, he concluded, not without a feeling of relief, that he had mistaken the striking of the clock.

From somewhere not far off came the subdued rushing of water. Someone was going to have a bath. Therefore it couldn't be very late. Also, a moment later, he was pleasantly aware of a faint aroma of coffee and something else that might be broiling ham or bacon. He suddenly knew that he was very, very hungry. A door slammed nearby and a merry whistle floated down

the hall. Then silence again. Sam closed his eyes——

"——Breakfast coming up in a minute," a voice was saying, "and I thought maybe you'd like to wash up a bit."

Sam blinked dazedly. Beside the bed stood Mr. York, smiling, fresh and cool in white flannels. Sam viewed him in consternation.

"I—I believe I went to sleep again!" he stammered.

"I'm sure you did!" laughed his host.

"But—but what time is it?"

"Oh, about eight-thirty. It's not late."

"Eight-thirty! Why, I never slept that late in my life!" exclaimed Sam in horrified tones. Mr. York laughed delightedly.

"You have now, old chap. How's it seem?"

"Fine, only—I'm wondering if—if I'm all right. You don't suppose I got hit on the head or—or anything like that, do you, sir?"

"Great Scott, no! You just slept because you were tired out and were in a new place and, if I do say it, had a good bed. Now, how's the knee this morning?"

Mr. York himself attended to putting on new

bandages, in spite of Sam's expostulations, and brought him water in a bowl and soap and a face-cloth and found his tooth-brush for him and generally valeted him. Sam was all for doing things for himself, even for being allowed to get up and have his breakfast downstairs, but when, at Mr. York's request, he gently bent that right knee, he concluded that he was not, after all, quite ready to assert his independence. The thing was as stiff and lame as could be.

"Thought so," said the other. "You keep it quiet to-day, Craig. To-night we'll get at it with liniment and to-morrow you'll be up and around again, I guess. After breakfast we'll get you down on the veranda. There you are, now. How's your appetite?"

Sam smiled. "I could eat a hedgehog, quills and all," he answered.

"Sorry we haven't hedgehog this morning," laughed Mr. York. "I'm afraid it's only the usual ham and eggs and trimmings. But I'll see that you get enough of that."

An hour afterwards, attired in a dressing-gown of his host's, Sam was lying at length in a long wicker chair, propped up with many red cushions,

on the broad veranda. Although considerably lower than the neighbouring camp, "Greysides," as Mr. York called his place, was still pretty well up in the world, and from the veranda one could look over rolling hills and see, on fair days, the distant blue of Lake Erie. The house was large, or seemed so to Sam, and was of field stone and grey weathered shingle, with numerous wide stone chimneys and many squatty gable-ends. The veranda that skirted three sides of the house was as wide as a room, and from it, between stone pillars, one saw on each side miles of rolling hills, wooded or meadowed. A path turned and twisted down a little slope from the broad steps to a break in the stone wall that lined the road. There there was a roughly-made trellis-arch of unbarked logs on which a rose vine was showing a few late blossoms. Behind the house the ground sloped upward again, and the trees, well thinned out in front, closed their ranks. Sam thought the place wonderful and perfect, inside and out, and all during that first forenoon was sorely tempted to pinch himself to make sure that he was really there.

Presently Mr. York joined his guest, pulling a

chair near to Sam's and chatting as he opened his morning's mail. Sam accepted a day-old newspaper and idly glanced over the first page of it, but somehow newspapers seemed of little interest up here away from the world, and he soon let it drop and returned to his contented and dreamy contemplation of the distant hills. After a while Mr. York tossed aside his letters and papers and leaned back in his chair. Then they talked. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that Sam talked, for Mr. York wanted to know many things and Sam was soon telling all about himself and about Amesville and the high school nine, with Mr. York only contributing an occasional encouraging word or a question. Normally Sam wasn't very much of a talker, and he didn't remember ever having said so much at once or told so many intimate facts about himself before. Afterwards he was surprised and a little embarrassed when he recalled his loquacity.

But it wasn't altogether one-sided, for Sam learned somewhat of his host that morning, and more subsequently. Mr. York—John Orville York, in full—was an architect by profession and lived in Cleveland. He was alone in the world

save for a sister whom he called Topsy—Sam didn't learn her real name. Topsy, Mr. York explained, was just now away on a visit to friends in the East and he was keeping bachelor's hall. He had been at "Greysides" since the middle of July, with an occasional visit to the city, and his vacation would be at an end in another ten days. Although he did not say so, his visitor concluded that he was wealthy; everything at "Greysides" indicated it. He had graduated from Warner College, where he had played three years on the baseball team, and had afterwards studied his profession in Chicago. He confessed to two passions. One, he said, was baseball, and the other chess. Did Craig play chess? No? Well, he ought to learn it. It was the finest thing in the world. After dinner they'd get the board out and have a lesson, by Jove!

Almost before Sam realised that the morning had gone luncheon was announced and they adjourned, Sam leaning on Mr. York's shoulder, to a screen-enclosed porch that opened from the dining-room, and sat down at a small table laid for two.

"Hope you'll find enough to eat," said Mr.

York. "We don't have very hearty lunches. I usually play golf in the afternoon and find that a heavy meal makes me slow."

Sam truthfully replied that he didn't doubt but what there was more than enough, and events proved him right. After cold meats and two vegetables and a salad and hot rolls and a pastry and two tall glasses of iced-tea he wondered what Mr. York would consider a heavy meal!

"If you want to do anything—play golf, I mean, sir—please don't mind me," said Sam when he had hobbled back to the veranda. "I'll be all right alone. I can read or—or just sit here and look at things."

"Not many things to see, are there?" laughed Mr. York.

"I mean just the view. It's fine to be able to see so far, isn't it?"

"It's quite a view, and that's a fact. But I don't care for golf to-day, Craig. Later on I'll run over to the village and get a letter off. Meanwhile we'll chin some more and then you'd better lie down a while and have a nap. How's the knee now?"

"It isn't nearly so sore, I think."

"That's good, but we ought to moisten that bandage again. I'll tell William to bring some water in a basin, and, as there's no one to see, we'll perform the operation right here."

They talked baseball while the sun travelled into the west and the shadows began to lengthen under the trees. Mr. York had many reminiscences of college days, some exciting and some humorous, and Sam was well entertained. From stories Mr. York switched to the subject of catching. "There's one thing you ought to learn, Craig," he said, "and that's to throw 'from your ear.' Ever try it?"

"I don't believe I know what you mean, Mr. York."

"I mean throwing to base without taking a step."

"No, sir, I've never tried it. I don't think I could do it."

"Oh, yes, you could. You can learn it. It's not as hard as it may seem. The beauty of it is that it gives you another fraction of a second on the runner, a matter probably of two or three feet at the base. Try it some time and see what you can do with it. It takes a snap of the arm instead

of the long, full swing, a quick snap that's mostly from the elbow; like this." And Mr. York went through the motions of catching a ball and throwing to the base.

"It looks hard," said Sam. "I don't believe I ever saw anyone throw that way."

"Plenty of the league catchers do it. Have you seen many league games?"

"No, sir, only two."

"Really? It's a good idea to go to them and watch how they do things. You can pick up a lot of good tricks that way. You've got the making of a fine catcher, Craig, and I'd like to see you go right ahead. You've got brains, for one thing, and I'd rather have that in a catcher than mechanical ability—if I had to choose between the two, that is. Another thing that's going to make you a clever lad behind the bat is that you're no weak hitter yourself. There's one criticism I'd like to offer, though: you're a little bit inclined to 'slug,' Craig. Don't do it. I know that the slugging hitter sometimes makes a corking good slam, but, in the long run, he doesn't deliver a good average. He isn't generally there in the pinches, Craig. Any pitcher will tell you that he'd rather pitch to

a 'slugger' than to a batter who shortens his bat and his swing and 'pushes' the ball. A long swing is likely to take your eyes off the pill just when they should be glued to it, for one thing. And then, again, you can't place your hits so well. Take the hit-and-run play, for instance. Suppose the runner's going down to second and shortstop's covering the bag, and you've got to poke one between second and third. You can't deliver the goods with a long swing. You've got to shorten. If you do swing long and connect with it, it's dollars to doughnuts the ball will go anywhere but down that alley. And then, the first thing you know, you're doubled up. I dare say you think I'm cheeky for criticising you like this, but I'd like to see you make good. You've got a lot of the ear-marks of a natural-born catcher, old man, and good catchers—really good ones—are almost as scarce as hens' teeth."

"I don't mind it at all," Sam assured him earnestly. "It—it's awfully good of you to tell me. And I'd like to know how to do better."

"That's the stuff! No one knows it all—although maybe you think I talk as if I did! I don't, not by a whole big lot. When I was catching for

Warner I did a lot of the things I'm telling you not to. I was the worst old heavy hitter on the team. I was a regular joke on the batting list. About once in every game I'd come through with a regular whale of a slam, usually into right field. Sometimes it would be good for three bases, or sometimes two. More often, though, a fielder would pull it down. Or, if he didn't, that hit would come along with the bases empty. When there was a man on third and the pitcher tightened up I was a frost. I pursued that misguided course for two years. Then one day—we were playing one of our big games—I happened to overhear a remark made by the other team's pitcher. 'York?' he said. 'I'll pitch to him with my eyes shut. The man's a "swinger"!' That opened my eyes. I'd always thought the reason I couldn't hit when I wanted to hardest was because the luck was against me or because the pitcher put a little extra on the ball, knowing my reputation as a long hitter. But that day it dawned on me that it was no one's fault but my own. And the next morning I went out to the net and I started to learn to bat all over again. I never got into the three-hundred class, but I

got where it wasn't necessary to pull me out of the game in the eighth or ninth inning when a hit was needed to win.

"Mind you," continued Mr. York, when he had lighted his pipe again, "I'm not saying there aren't lots of 'free hitters' and 'swingers' with big reputations; some of them have headed the list in their time; but sooner or later the pitchers find their weakness and then they go down quickly. No, sir, it isn't the 'swinger' who gets on oftenest, and it isn't the 'swinger' who makes the best clean-up hitter. It's the man who takes a short swing, not a 'chop'; that's poor stuff; but a healthy short swing, who comes across oftenest. You try it, Craig. Don't stand back and have to reach for the ball, either. Crowd the plate a bit. Get 'over the ball,' as they say."

"I will," replied Sam. "I guess you're right about a long swing. It *is* harder to judge the ball. I've noticed that, especially when the ball breaks close up. On a straight ball I can generally connect, but anything foxy has me guessing. I almost always get fooled on a drop or a floater."

"It stands to reason. You've got to watch that sort until the last minute and then you've got to

swing quick, and from the elbows and not the shoulders. As far as hitting for extra bases is concerned, why, I can point out men who can almost 'chop' the ball for a two-bagger. I sort of wish we had a ball and you were able to use that leg of yours," added Mr. York wistfully, "and a bat."

"That sounds like the old darky in Washington who used to say, 'If I had a little milk I'd have a little mush if I had a little meal,' doesn't it?" asked Sam.

Later Mr. York went off in his automobile and Sam lay down on a couch in the big living-room, and, to please his host, tried to take a nap. He didn't succeed, however. Dinner came at seven, with the dining-room windows wide open and the blue-black sky, a-twinkle with white stars, in sight whenever Sam looked away from the mellow radiance of the candles. And after that he had his initiation into the mysteries of chess. Mr. York said he did very well, but Sam feared that he had been terribly stupid when the chessmen were finally put away.

"That," said Mr. York, seating himself again in a big easy-chair and taking one knee into his

hands, "almost did me out of my diploma at college. One of the instructors and I used to play chess five evenings a week until all hours. I just scraped through my finals. Speaking of college, Craig, I suppose you've got yours all picked out, eh?"

"Me? No, sir. I—I guess I won't go to college."

"Won't go! Why not?"

"Can't afford it, sir," replied Sam, with a twinkle. "They say it costs money."

"Oh, that!" said Mr. York carelessly. "You'd like to, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, sir, I'd like to well enough, but——"

"Lots of chaps go through without a cent, or, at least, with almost no money. There were half a dozen chaps in my class at Warner who were a heap—er—who had less to spend than you have."

Sam looked puzzled. "But how did they do it, sir? You mean scholarships?"

"Partly, in one or two cases. The trouble is with scholarships, Craig, that you usually have to work hard for them and you can't ever be certain you'll pull one down. No, the chaps I was thinking of were fellows who were rather prominent in

sports—football, baseball, track. They found jobs waiting them. A couple were managers of frat houses, one was a sort of assistant in the Athletic Director's office and had the programme privilege. There are quite a few jobs like that to be had by wide-awake chaps with—er—athletic ability."

"Oh," said Sam softly, "I see."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### MR. YORK MAKES A PROPOSITION

"It works well both ways," continued Mr. York. "The college gets the services of, say, a good football man, and the student gets an education. It's a fair exchange."

"But isn't it a good deal like—like paying a fellow to play for the college, sir?"

"Oh, there's nothing like that to it! Here's the way it's done, Craig. Most graduates like to see their college stand high in everything, athletic as well as educational efficiency. Some of them have money and they're glad to spend a portion of it for their college. When they run across a fellow who—well, a fellow like you, for instance, who has a talent for baseball, they say to themselves, 'Here's a chap who could help us win our games. He can't afford to go to college unless he can find some way to meet his expenses. Let's find a position for him.' So they use their influence and the chap gets the managership of one of the fra-

ternity houses, or becomes dining-hall steward, or something of that sort. The work isn't hard and the salary is sufficient to pay his tuition and ordinary expenses; and he gets his room and board as a part of his remuneration. He has plenty of time for study and plenty of time to perform his part of the—er—bargain, which is to play on the eleven or the nine or whatever the team may be. Its all honest and fair and—customary."

Sam looked troubled. "I didn't know that was done," he said after a moment. "Of course, I'd heard of such things, but I always thought it was just—just talk."

"It's done every day," replied the other cheerfully. "Lucky it is, too, for a lot of worthy fellows who otherwise wouldn't get the education they need. Take your case, Craig. I don't know what line you expect to take up, but whatever it is, you know as well as I do that you ought to go through college. There's nothing like a college education to fit a chap for his profession or business. I don't mean only what he learns from books; I mean what he learns from association with other men of his own age, from instructors and professors as well; from being part of

a small and busy world in which he is confronted by just such problems and difficulties—temptations, too—as he will meet with later in the bigger world. He has responsibilities and duties and learns to meet them and perform them, and in doing it he acquires self-dependence and self-control. A college education is a sort of general massage, Craig; it develops mind and body, brain and muscles. Don't you think that's so?"

"Yes, sir, I guess it is, but——"

"Very well. Now you need college, old man. Why not have it? You have something to exchange for your course. You have a fine talent for baseball. Take my own college, for instance, Warner; and there isn't a finer one East or West. We need a chap like you to play on our ball team in a couple of years. And in return for your services we'll give you an education. We won't do it by buying you, Craig. We will do it by finding you a position that will meet your money requirements. And there'll be no strings to you. We simply say, 'Here's a four-year course at Warner for you, which you are to pay for by filling this position to the best of your ability. All we ask beside that is that you play baseball for us and do

your honest best to make good.' That's all. See what I mean?"

"Yes, sir."

"Of course, if you had told me that you had selected your college I wouldn't have said anything about this. But you haven't, and you tell me you don't believe you'll go to college because of the expense. So, being a loyal grad, as well as a baseball enthusiast, I make this proposition to you, Craig, knowing that it is a mutually beneficial one; beneficial to you, as you can't help seeing, and beneficial to Warner College in the way I've pointed out. And, lest you think the thing is all loyalty and unselfishness on my part, I don't mind acknowledging that it would give me a lot of genuine satisfaction and pleasure, as well as a new interest, to be the means of bringing you and the college together. I don't ask you to decide this matter now. Take all the time you want, Craig. You've got a year at high school yet, and, for that matter, if you preferred to wait another year before entering college there'd be no objection. In fact, it might be a good plan. You'd still be only nineteen, which is young enough, and you'd probably be of more good to the team. Of

course, though, if you did that you'd need to keep on with your baseball work. It might be a good idea for you to play one summer on an amateur or a semi-professional team just for the experience. But you'd have to be careful not to accept any money. That sort of thing gets around and you might find yourself a professional; in which case we couldn't use you at Warner, you know. You mull it over, old man, and then, later on in the autumn, drop me a line. Perhaps I'll be down in your town before long and we can talk it over again. I'm not trying to force your hand tonight. Take all the time you want to decide, Craig."

"I guess I don't need any more time, Mr. York," answered Sam ruefully. "I'm very much obliged to you, and—and I appreciate your wanting to help me like that, but—I'd rather not, sir."

"You think it over. Don't decide now."

"I'd rather, please. I'm sorry. If I'd known, I wouldn't have—have you let you go to all this bother with me. I'm—I'm awfully sorry, Mr. York, honest!" And Sam observed the other regretfully, apologetically.

Mr. York stared a moment. Then, "Look here,

Craig," he said drily, "you've got rather a mean idea of me, haven't you?"

"Why, no, sir!"

"Sounds so. You think I invited you down here to put you under an obligation to me, eh? So that when I made that proposition to you, you'd feel more or less obliged to accept it. Well, now let me tell you something, Craig. I didn't. I asked you down here because I liked you and because I wanted to do anything I could to make you comfortable. You may believe that or not, as you please, but it's so."

"I do!" said Sam earnestly. "I'm sorry I thought anything else, even for a minute. If I'd stopped to think I wouldn't have, I guess. I—I beg your pardon."

"You needn't, Craig. Come to look at it from your point of view, I don't blame you for your conclusion. I guess it does look a bit as if I had been 'swiping.' I'm sorry. But please get it out of your mind, if it's still there, that my—er—hospitality has anything to do with my offer regarding Warner. It hasn't. I'd have asked you here if you didn't know a baseball from a quinine pill——" Mr. York paused, laughed, and cor-

rected himself. "Perhaps I shouldn't have, though, for my liking for you began when I saw you catch that game last June. I'm inclined, you see, to be predisposed in favour of any chap who can play baseball well, and ready to hug one who acts like a regular catcher. But I'd have asked you here if I'd known beforehand that there wasn't a chance of nabbing you for Warner, old man. That settles that. Let's forget it. Sorry I put myself in the position I did. As for the proposition, why, we'll say no more about it."

"I think I'd like to explain a little," said Sam. "I don't want you to think I'm—ungrateful——"

"Piffle!"

"Or—or goody-goody. But the thing looks to me"—Sam hesitated and tried to choose an expression that would not wound his host—"it looks to me too much like—like cheating."

"Then I haven't put it well, Craig. Now, look here——"

"Putting it well," replied Sam, with a slow smile, "wouldn't affect the fact, sir, would it? It seems to me that it doesn't much matter whether you give me money outright to pay my expenses at Warner or whether you pay that money to a

fraternity and say, 'Here, you give this to Sam Craig and tell him it's salary.''

"But it *is* salary!"

"But you'd be paying it, sir."

"Someone would have to, and I could afford it. Why, hang it, the thing's done every day, I tell you!"

"Maybe, sir, but——" Sam paused a moment. Then, "Mr. York, if I happened to be your son and I told you someone had made me such an offer, would you say, 'Take it'?"

"No, because if you were my boy it wouldn't be necessary for you to accept—er——"

"Charity, you were going to say, weren't you, sir? But suppose you couldn't afford to pay my tuition at college, sir. Then what? Would you want me to accept the—the proposition?"

"Why not? It's a fair business arrangement, isn't it, Craig?"

"Perhaps it is, but if you were my father would you want people to say that I was being paid to play baseball for some college?"

Mr. York's gaze turned to the open door and a frown puckered his forehead. Several moments passed. Sam, with that little smile that seldom

got farther than his eyes, watched and waited. Finally Mr. York turned his gaze back to the boy and an unwilling smile overspread his face, a smile that was more than half a scowl.

"I'll be blessed if I would, Craig!" he said.

Another moment of silence went by. Then, "Just the same, old man, you took a mean advantage of me, then," he objected ruefully. "You see, I haven't a boy. Wish I had. If I had I'd be as cranky as an old hen about him. Well, that's settled, Craig, and you win. I'm sorry——"

He paused, pulled himself out of his chair, and frowned.

"Hanged if I'm sorry," he laughed. "I'm glad of it! Langham told me I'd fall down, and—and I guess, on the whole, I'm glad I did. Now let's go to bed, eh?"

## CHAPTER XIX

### HOME AGAIN

Sam's knee was so much better the next morning that he announced his intention of joining the campers that afternoon. Mr. York pressed him to stay until next day, but, seeing that Sam really preferred to take his departure, studied the itinerary that Mr. Langham had left with Sam and helped him locate the expedition.

"Take the two-fifty-two from here," advised Mr. York, "and change at Wickston for Norrence. Let's see what train you can get. Wickston—Wickston—south-bound—Here we are. Leave Wickston at four-twelve and arrive Norrence at five-thirty-six. That's rather late, isn't it? And after you get there you'll have to find the camp."

"I guess it won't take long," said Sam. "This thing says, 'Norrence, Lindenville road, east of village.' That oughtn't to be hard to find."

"No, if they camp where they say they will you can get them in half an hour, I dare say. Besides,

it doesn't get really dark until nearly seven. I'd like to have you stay longer, but if you insist on going, why, I'll take you over for that two-fifty-two. I made a mistake in giving that knee of yours such a good rubbing last night, Craig."

"It certainly cured it, sir. It doesn't hurt a mite to-day, unless I punch it." And Sam pressed the knee experimentally, to Mr. York's amusement.

"You're a regular boy, Craig," he laughed. "I remember when I was a kid and had a toothache I'd put my finger in my mouth and bite down on it as hard as I could to see how badly it would hurt! Well, we've got four hours before lunch, and if you want to try out that leg of yours we'll stroll around and see the place."

The morning passed quickly. The subject of college was not mentioned again until, at half-past two, they were speeding along the road to the station in the grey roadster. Then Mr. York said:

"Craig, could you pass a college examination next fall if you had to?"

"I'm not sure," replied Sam. "I don't just know what the requirements are, Mr. York. I've

never thought much about it, you see, because it's never seemed I had any chance to get to college. I guess I'd have trouble with my Latin, though."

"Well, look here, I wish you'd try this winter and see if you can't get yourself ready. If nothing comes of it, it won't do you a bit of harm. But—well, I hope something will come of it, old man. I'd like very much to be sure that you were going through college. Perhaps you think I'm a strange sort of a chap to meddle so much in your affairs, but you've made quite a hit with me, Sam, especially since last night; and when I like anyone I want to see him get all that's coming to him. I don't care a continental what college you go to or whether you play ball or don't. That's out of it. But I would like to see you get to college."

"I'd like it myself, Mr. York. Only I wouldn't want to go unless I could do it fairly."

"You're right, old man. The end doesn't always justify the means. Well, I'm going to put my thinking cap on and see if between us we can't find a way. I'll write to the secretary at Warner and see if there's a scholarship you could try for. I'll write to the other colleges around here, too. Look here, if you could get a real job next sum-

mer that would pay you, say, eighteen or twenty dollars a week, would you take it?"

"I'd jump at it!" said Sam. "But I don't believe I know enough to make that much, Mr. York. There isn't much I can do, I guess."

"Seems to me you can do a good many things. You told me you'd canvassed for books, sold newspapers, and worked in a mill. And now you're being councillor in a boys' camp."

"None of those jobs paid eighteen dollars a week, though, sir."

"No, but what I'm getting at is that if you can do those things you can do other things. The only problem is to find something that will bring you real money. With, say, a couple of hundred dollars I dare say you wouldn't be afraid to start college."

"N-no, sir. Two hundred wouldn't go very far, though, would it? Even at a state university?"

"It would pay your tuition, maybe. Tell you what I want you to do, Sam, when you get home. You go and see John Holden. I'm going to write to him about you. He's a fine fellow. You can't help liking him. And he is going to be a good

man to know before very long. He's only just making his start now, but he's the sort you can't stop, and in five years he will be Somebody in your town. You go and see him and tell him who you are. Get to know him. John and I are pretty good friends; have been ever since we were freshmen in college; they used to call us the Pair of Jacks. In that way you and I'll be able to keep in touch. I'm a fairly busy man when I get back to work and I'm not much of a letter-writer, but if you'll let me hear from you now and then I'll see that your letters don't go unanswered. And I'll keep my eyes open and see if I can't find some job that will put some money in your pocket when next summer comes."

"I'd like that," responded Sam gratefully. "I'd be willing to do 'most anything, I guess. Only—only I wouldn't want you to—to just *make up* a job for me, Mr. York."

"You're certainly suspicious!" laughed the other. "But I give you my word, Sam, that if I find anything for you it will be real work and well worth the pay. Here we are, with four minutes to spare. By the way, how about funds? All right that way, are you?"

"I have enough, thanks."

"Quite sure? Glad to lend you a few dollars. You can return it when you reach camp, you know."

"I have plenty, sir, truly."

The car swept up to the platform and they jumped out, Sam with his battered valise. By the time he had purchased his ticket to Norrence the train was bustling in. Mr. York went to the car-steps with him and shook hands there.

"Good-bye, Sam. Take care of yourself, and let me hear from you, please. I certainly enjoyed having you with me, old man, and next summer, if we can fix it, you must come up again. Good-bye! Try throwing from your ear and shorten your swing!"

Sam's own farewells were drowned by Mr. York's and abruptly cut short by the sudden starting of the train, but he managed a more or less coherent speech of thanks before he got beyond hearing. The last he saw of Mr. York was that gentleman standing beside his car evoking excruciating blasts on the electric horn with one hand and waving farewell with the other.

Before dark Sam had found the encampment

outside Norrence and was eating a belated supper. The following three days were pleasant ones. They broke camp every morning after an early breakfast, fixed their packs, and hiked until an hour before noon. Then came a three-hour rest by the road, with dinner, and at about two they were off again. They did about eighteen miles a day, ate ravenously, slept like logs, and reached Indian Lake the evening of the fourth day after leaving Mount Placid, a little footsore but only healthily tired. Kitty-Bett had a hot supper awaiting them and they more than did justice to it.

Sam found a letter awaiting him from Tom Pollock. As it was short and concise we may as well quote it in full. "Dear Sam," wrote Tom, "when are you coming home? The reason I want to know is that Lynton is to play us here on the sixteenth. She beat us the first game and we beat her last Saturday, 5 to 1, and we're going to play off the tie. We want you to catch for us. I looked up that letter from Mr. Langham and it said the camp ran to September 13th. If that's so you'll be back here by Thursday, I guess. Let me know if you will and if you'll play Saturday.

All well here and I'm very busy. Sid is kicking his heels against the counter as I write this and wants to be remembered. Yours as ever,

"Tom."

Sam answered the epistle the next morning and saw it off by Jerry the mailman. (The boys took delight in referring to Jerry according to the duty he was at the moment engaged in, as "Jerry the scullion," "Jerry the iceman," "Jerry the woodman," and so on. On one occasion, Dick Barry discovered the versatile Jerry painfully inditing a letter and promptly dubbed him "Jerry the scribe.") Sam told Tom that he expected to be back in Amesville the sixth and would be glad to catch for the Blues the following Saturday, if nothing prevented.

A few days later came Visitors' Day, and the camp took on a gala appearance. Strings of flags blossomed along the fronts of the buildings, pine and hemlock branches were festooned about the dining-hall, floors were scrubbed until they shone, and no one, even with a microscope, could have discovered a bit of paper or any sort of litter from the landing back to the pulpit tree. The visitors were not many in number, for parents

and friends living at a distance found it impossible to reach Indian Lake before noon, but some twenty-odd appeared, and seemed to thoroughly enjoy the programme supplied for their entertainment. There was an aquatic carnival in the morning, with swimming and diving competitions and canoe races, and another thrilling tilting contest, to say nothing of a swimming exhibition by Junior Councillor Craig. And at one o'clock there was a special dinner for the guests, followed by one not quite so "special" for the boys. There was no siesta that day, which alone made it blessed in the eyes of the fellows! In the afternoon there were athletic events and a final ball game between the Indians, "Camp Champions," as the banner which they displayed proudly announced, and the Mascots. True to precedent the Indians won in six innings, thus finishing their season in a final burst of glory. The score was 16 to 4! But then, George Porter, with his mother and sister to watch him admiringly, pitched a remarkable game.

Some of the visitors stayed overnight, and for these tents were erected. Camp-fire was an especially merry occasion that evening. Very

agreeably, the moon came up, big and mellow, at nine and, so to speak, joined the party. The musicians were never better, and the songs were sung with unusual enthusiasm if no more melodiously. Bedtime was set back a full hour on this last night and it was nearly midnight when quiet finally settled over the moonlit camp.

The next morning the exodus began and by noon only a half-dozen or so fellows remained to bolt a hurried dinner and then tumble into the waiting coach and disappear, cheering, toward the village.

The councillors all remained with Mr. Langham until the next day. Shutters were to be closed and everything made ready for the winter before they left. Supper that evening was a pleasant meal. All were fairly tired, and they sat late about one end of the Chief's table and comfortably talked over the summer and their plans for winter. There was a little impromptu speech by Mr. Langham, in which he thanked the others for their help. And Mr. Haskins, replying for the councillors, was quite funny in his serious way, and they finally pushed back their chairs in

laughter and strolled over to the office feeling very kindly toward each other.

Mr. Langham, Mr. Haskins, and Sam travelled southward together the next morning, Mr. Gifford and Steve Brown parting from them at Indian Lake. Sam, with nearly sixty dollars in his pocket, a deep coat of tan over most of his body, and a fine appearance of rugged health, stepped from the train at Amesville at a little after four o'clock into the arms of Tom and Sidney.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE MAN IN THE PANAMA

"Tom, do you know Mr. John Hall?"

Sam, swinging his legs from the counter at Cummings and Wright's, had to wait a full minute for an answer, for Tom Pollock finished writing an order for football supplies before he raised his head. It was a little before nine o'clock on the morning following Sam's return to Amesville, and the store was empty of customers. Tom signed "Cummings and Wright Hardware Co., T. Pollock," blotted the sheet, and pulled an envelope toward him.

"John Logan Hall?" asked Tom then, glancing up. "The lawyer, Sam?"

"Yes, I think so. What's he like?"

"Sort of tall and thin; clean-shaven; wears a Panama hat about ten years old; lives at the Amesville Club, and has his office in the new building. Why?"

"Mr. York wants me to go and see him.

They're great friends. He was visiting Mr. Hall when he saw that game last spring, like I told you. Is he nice?"

"John Hall? I guess so. I don't know him except to speak to. He's been in here once or twice for golf balls. They say he's one of the best players at the Country Club. He seems a nice sort, Sam. I don't believe he'd bite you, anyway."

"N-no," answered Sam seriously, "but it seems sort of cheeky, doesn't it? To call on a man you've never even seen, I mean."

"You used to call on men you'd never seen when you sold that 'Popular History of Ohio,' or whatever it was, didn't you?"

"That was different."

"Yes; you were trying to do them out of their hard-earned money. All you want from Mr. Hall is a kind word."

"That was a perfectly good book," answered Sam defensively. "When do you suppose I'd find him at his office?"

Tom glanced at the little tin clock on his desk. "After nine, I guess." He put his clasped hands behind his head, leaned back, and viewed his

friend amusedly. "Sam, you're an awful coward about some things, aren't you?" he asked. "You wouldn't hesitate to try and sell a book to a man, but you hate to just call socially."

"I used to be scared to death every time I rang a doorbell when I was selling that book," replied Sam, with a shake of his head. "I wish Mr. York had given me a letter of introduction to him."

"Want me to go over with you and introduce you?" laughed Tom. "If you feel so bashful why not take a book with you and try to sell it to him? I'll lend you our telephone directory. You can call it anything you like—'Child's History of Amesville,' 'Things Every Lawyer Should Know,' 'How to Tell the Trolley Cars'——"

"Dry up," said Sam. "What about this game Saturday?"

"Why, nothing, except that we want like anything to win it, Sam. Lynton does too. Fact is, there's quite a little rivalry between us this year. They beat us pretty badly the first game and so Sid got them to play us again. Then we licked them. That was a week ago last Saturday. Then

they decided they'd have to play a third game and so they're coming over to-morrow."

"How did they happen to get away with the first game?" asked Sam.

"Principal reason, better playing," laughed Tom.

"Did they get to you?"

"Not once."

"Then how the dickens——"

"I didn't play. We'd just got in a big invoice of goods and I had to stay and help here at the store. Mr. Cummings wanted me to go, but I saw that Mr. Wright thought I ought to stick around."

"Who did pitch?" asked Sam.

"Various members of our brilliant team—Buster, Tommy Hughes, and Joe Kenny. I believe even Sid tried an inning. I dare say it was a lot of fun for Lynton."

"What was the score?"

Tom gazed at the ceiling. "Eighteen to three," he said softly.

Sam whistled. Then, "What about to-morrow?" he asked anxiously. "Any more invoices in sight?"

Tom laughed. "Not a one. To-morrow, Sam, we'll everlastingly whale those chaps! Revenge is the order of the day. By the way, they tried to get us to agree to play the same line-up, but we told them we couldn't promise that." Tom grinned. "Then I wrote to you. How are you hitting, Mr. Councillor?"

"Not much. Mr. York says I take too long a swing. I guess I do, too."

"Oh, never mind that if you hit the ball; results are what count."

"Mr. York says if I take a shorter swing I'll hit oftener."

"Look here, Sam, I dare say this Mr. York of yours is a fine chap and all that, but if you don't stop talking about him I'll throw a fit! I haven't heard much else since yesterday but 'Mr. York'!"

"He thinks you're a great little pitcher, Tom," replied Sam, with a twinkle.

Tom smiled. "Why? Because I have big ears?"

"Big ears?" Sam looked puzzled. "He didn't say anything about your ears."

"That was a joke," explained Tom patiently. "There's a saying that little pitchers have big

ears, you know, and you said he said—Oh, shucks! Never mind, you'll see it after a while."

"You ought to label your jokes," replied the other gently. "How's a fellow to know? How do you feel about school, Tom?"

"Full of enthusiasm," answered Tom. "I dearly love my school. Next Monday it's back to the grind, eh? When are you going to call fall practice?"

"As soon as possible, I guess. I've got to see Mr. Talbot pretty soon."

"Bat isn't back yet, I think. He went out West about three weeks ago, he and Mr. George; Grand Canyon and all that. I suppose they'll be back in a day or two, though. Excuse me a minute, Sam."

A customer had entered and Tom arose to wait on him. "I'll see you later, Tom," said Sam. "Guess I'll go and call on Mr. Hall."

"All right. The directory's in the booth back there."

Sam smiled gently and took his departure. Main Street had quite a busy look now. A few blocks further along, and on the opposite side, what Tom had called the "new building" reared

its fourteen stories high above the older structures. It was there that Mr. Hall had his office, and Sam, as he approached, searched the signs on the lower windows. He didn't see Mr. Hall's name, however, and before he could begin on the next tier there was a collision and Sam, recovering his balance and murmuring an apology, looked up into the smiling face of a tall man of about thirty years of age.

"No harm done," said the man pleasantly. "My fault, too, I guess."

He stepped to the right and at the same instant Sam embarrassedly stepped to the lift. "Beg pardon," muttered Sam, and stepped further toward the curb. So did the tall man. Sam felt the blood creeping into his face. The man laughed.

"Well, we'll never get anywhere this way, will we?" he asked. "Now I tell you what we'll do. You stand quite still"—the man held up an admonishing finger—"and I'll carefully walk around you. Don't move!"

Sam, very red of face, obeyed silently and the tall man circled him to the left. "All right!" he said. "We're off again!"

Sam looked after him. He walked with a quick,

springy stride and wore a yellow and somewhat battered Panama hat. The horrible suspicion forced itself into Sam's mind that the man was John Hall! Tom had said that he was tall and thin, and wore a ten-year-old Panama. Sam couldn't be certain about the age of that hat, but it looked as if it might easily have seen ten summers, and the man was tall, decidedly tall and thin. There could be no doubt about it! Sam very cautiously moved to a window and gazed unseeingly into it, conscious of the amused glances of several bystanders and of the heightened colour in his face. What an idiot Mr. Hall must think him, he mused. Well, there was no use trying to find him in his office now, for he had disappeared in the throng in the other direction. Sam was heartily glad of it, for he had very little taste left for that visit. Perhaps to-morrow—or the next day——

He made his way back toward Cummings and Wright's. He had meant to make a purchase there and had forgotten it. He was still thinking of that awkward moment on the sidewalk when he entered the store, and didn't observe that Tom was busy with a customer until he had himself

reached the counter. Even then he paid no heed to the man beside him until Tom caught sight of him, and grinned maliciously and observed:

"Hello, Sam! How are directories selling?"

Then, following the other's glance, Sam discovered, to his embarrassment, that the customer was none other than the man in the Panama hat. The latter was selecting half a dozen golf balls from a box that Tom had presented, and had been very intent on his task until Tom's greeting called the newcomer to his attention. Then he glanced up, and a smile of recognition came to his face.

"Ah," he said, "my late adversary!"

Tom looked puzzled and Sam most unhappy. He tried to smile, but made a poor effort of it. The man in the Panama returned to a study of the golf balls. After a moment he completed his selection and nodded to Tom.

"I'll take these," he said. Then, as Tom proceeded to do them up, he turned toward Sam, who was looking very intently at something in a showcase, and viewed him appraisingly. Sam, well aware of the scrutiny, felt his cheeks growing hot again.

"I've been wondering ever since if it was an

aëroplane," said the man presently. Sam tried to pretend that he didn't know the remark was addressed to him, but something compelled him to meet the issue.

"What, sir?" he asked.

"I said I'd been wondering if it was an aëroplane," repeated the other. "I'm interested in aëroplanes and wouldn't want to miss seeing one. It was that, wasn't it?"

"I—I don't quite understand," stammered Sam.

"I refer to your intent study of the heavens," replied the other, with deep gravity. "You seemed to be so absorbed——"

"I was looking at the new building, sir. I—I'm sorry I was so stupid!"

"So that was it? Well, I'm glad it wasn't an aëroplane."

Tom, handing the package across and accepting the bill proffered in payment, was plainly nonplussed. It sounded to him as though the two had gone quite crazy! He looked at Sam and then at the man in the Panama, and, finally, as he returned the change, he blurted:

"You two have met, then!"

"Oh, yes, indeed—violently," replied the man. "Still, if you can introduce us properly——"

"Why, I thought——" began Tom. Then he laughed. "Mr. Hall," he said, "this is my friend Sam Craig. Sam is selling directories, and I think he was looking for you."

"He found me," replied the other quizzically as he shook hands. "I've been trying to place you, Mr. Craig, ever since we bumped. I remember now that I saw you catch a game against Petersburg last spring. You're still playing ball, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir; that is, I—sometimes."

"I really feel honoured in possessing the acquaintance of two such talented players. I want to see you chaps in action again sometime."

"Better come to the game to-morrow, Mr. Hall," said Tom. "We're going to play Lynton at the school field at three."

"To-morrow? Why, I'm afraid—The fact is, I'm playing golf to-morrow afternoon. Sorry. Wish I might see the game. Now, what about these directories, Mr. Craig? I don't believe I want to invest, but if you care to tell me what it is you're handling——"

"That's only Tom's joke, sir," said Sam apologetically. "I'm not selling anything."

"Oh, then you weren't looking for me?"

"No, sir—yes, sir, I was, only——"

"The plot thickens! Only what?"

"I mean I was going to your office, but after I ran into you I thought there wouldn't be any use going, and so I came in here. I didn't know you were here, sir."

Tom was enjoying Sam's embarrassment hugely. "Better confess everything, Sam," he said soberly, "if you want Mr. Hall to help you."

"Eh?" said Mr. Hall. Sam frowned.

"Cut it out," he muttered.

"Look here, Mr. Craig, your story interests me strangely," declared the man. "You were looking for me, only you weren't. Sounds a great deal as though you thought I was a dentist. By the way, how did you know who I was when we collided?"

"Tom told me that—I mean, he described you."

"I'd like to have heard the description," chuckled Mr. Hall. "What was it, Pollock?"

It was Tom's turn to be embarrassed. "I don't

just remember, Mr. Hall. This idiot was told to call on you by a friend of yours, and he's too bashful to say so."

"A friend of mine? Really?" Mr. Hall turned to Sam interestedly. "Who was it, Mr. Craig?"

"Mr. York said——"

"John York?" demanded the other eagerly.

"Yes, sir. He said when I got home I was to call and tell you he sent me. He said he would write to you about it."

"Just the sort of thing he would do!" laughed Mr. Hall. "Sent you along without a letter of introduction, eh? Well, I'm very glad to know you, Mr. Craig. Any friend of John's is my friend." He shook hands again heartily. "Where did you meet him? Hold on, though, I must get back to the office. Can't you come along and tell me about it? Or are you busy just now?"

"No, sir, I haven't anything to do."

"Then come along. We can talk better at the office. Much obliged, Pollock. And, come to think of it, I don't know but what I'll call off that golf to-morrow and see you chaps play instead. I suppose you're going to pitch?"

"Yes, sir, and Sam's to catch. Maybe you'd be willing to umpire for us?"

"Thank you for your sweet thought, Pollock, but I'm too useful a member of this community to risk my life. I'll yell for you, but I'd rather not take chances."

## CHAPTER XXI

### MR. HALL TALKS BASEBALL

On the way to the office Sam narrated the story of his meeting with Mr. York, and his companion chuckled at intervals. Sam had not concluded his narrative when they passed through the door of the Adams Building and entered the elevator. Up they shot to the tenth floor and there Mr. Hall led the way to an office on the side of the building. The door held the inscription, "John T. Hall, Attorney and Councillor-at-Law." The office was small, but light and cheerful, and was plainly furnished. Mr. Hall hung his Panama on a hook behind the door and pulled a chair forward for his visitor, seating himself at his desk between the two broad windows.

"Now we can be comfortable," he said. "So John said he'd write me a letter, eh?"

"Yes, sir. Didn't he—hasn't he——"

"No, nor ever will," laughed the other. "I've known him for almost twenty years and I've never

had but three letters from him! He hates them like poison; writing them, I mean. But it doesn't matter a bit, Craig. I'm just as glad to know you as if he'd written twenty pages about you. Besides, you can tell me more than he can, anyway. You live here in Amesville, of course?"

"Yes, sir, on Curtis Street."

"Then we'll soon get acquainted. Your name sounds familiar to me, by the way. Have I met your father, perhaps?"

"No, sir, he's dead. There's just my mother and sister and me, sir. You might have met my sister, though. She does typewriting here. She has a room on the third floor."

"Of course! Miss Craig and I have had a lot of business together. So she's your sister, is she? Well, she's a fine, smart girl, Craig, and a good stenographer, too, by George! I suppose you and John talked baseball a good deal, eh?"

"Yes, sir, quite a lot."

"And he gave you a heap of advice, too, I'll wager!"

"Yes, sir, some."

"Of course! He's as full of advice as a pud-

ding is of plums. He's the sort who wants everyone to do things his way," chuckled Mr. Hall. "We used to have some fine old spats when we were in college together. John not only wanted to catch, but pitch, too. If he could have had his way he'd have played every position on the team, I guess!"

"He told me two or three things I didn't know about catching, Mr. Hall."

"Oh, he can tell you things, all right! He's full of perfectly wonderful information. He's the sort who, if he was presented to the King of England, would start right off telling that gentleman how to improve his batting average!"

Sam smiled. "What he told me sounded pretty good, though," he said defensively.

"It *was* good; no doubt about that, Craig. Theoretically, John York was the best catcher Warner ever had. Actually, he was the most uncertain. You see, he was full of theories. He doped everything out ahead and when things didn't go the way he'd arranged them there'd be trouble. He'd study a new batter when he came up and decide that the man would hit a high ball over the outside corner into left field. Then he'd

signal for a low one and the batter would crack it into the middle of next week, and John would be so surprised and grieved about it! After the inning he'd sit on the bench and prove conclusively to you that the man had no business hitting a low one, that he was built for high ones! The trouble with John was that he wouldn't practise what he preached. He knew how a thing ought to be played, but he had a hunch that he'd get better results if he played it differently. I used to tell him he thought too much with his head. But in spite of all that we loved him. He was one of the most popular fellows in college. And you're not to think that he always went wrong with his game, for he didn't. Lots of times his theories worked out like miracles."

"I remember"—Mr. Hall picked up a paper-knife and, leaning back in his swivel chair, played with it and smiled reminiscently—"I remember a game we played with Michigan. John was captain that year. (We made him captain because he'd have been it anyway and we thought there'd be no use having two.) We were two runs behind Michigan in the seventh and hadn't got a run across for three or four innings. Michigan's

pitcher had us eating out of his hand, and if anyone did start a rally their infield cut it off. So, in the seventh John said, 'Look here, fellows, we're playing too close to the ground. What we've got to do is cut loose and run wild for a couple of innings. Now I want every one of you to hit at anything you see, as long as you don't have to walk out of the box for it, and when you get on first I want you to go down to second on the first ball. And when you get to second, try for third. Those chaps aren't used to fireworks. Let's show them some.'

"Well, we wanted that game; we were always crazy to beat Michigan; and it didn't look as if we were going to get it. Michigan was playing one of those scientific games—every man fielding perfectly; pitcher and catcher working together like two cog-wheels; everything figured according to the laws and commandments of baseball. There didn't seem to be anything to lose by following John's scheme and so we tried it. The first batter up for our side acted as if he'd never heard of waiting. He whaled away at everything in sight and got a scratch hit somehow and went to first. And then he started down the path on the

first delivery. He was thrown out, though. But you could see that Michigan was beginning to wonder. Our next man slammed around and knocked fouls and finally got a clean hit, the first for half an hour. He followed instructions and stole second easily, in spite of a pitch-out, catcher throwing low to the base. Then we had them going. The next man drew his base and the man on second lighted out for third. He ought never to have got it, but he did. Someone fumbled. After that we ran wild on the bases. Even with two out we didn't show any sort of baseball sense. We did everything we shouldn't have done, and Michigan found herself as far up in the air as a balloon. We got five runs across in that inning on two hits and a pass!"

"And won the game?" asked Sam.

"N-no, we didn't, as a matter of fact. We ought to have, but those chaps got to me in the ninth and knocked me out of the box. I suppose romping around the bases and sliding on my ear sort of tuckered me. Anyway, they hammered me to the bench and then got two hits off Whipple and scored enough to win. Still, as John showed us, we *ought* to have won!"

"I'd like to have seen it," said Sam.

"It was some game," assented the other. "I guess I'll have to go out to-morrow and see you fellows play. I will if you'll let me sit on the bench and mix in."

"I wish you would," said Sam. "I dare say you could tell us some things that might help, Mr. Hall."

"Oh, I'm no John York!" laughed the lawyer. "I haven't many theories, Craig. I've always played the game by rule of thumb, so to say. This close-harmony, inside stuff has always been a bit beyond me."

"But there's a good deal in it, isn't there?" asked Sam. "Inside baseball, I mean."

"Oh, yes, I guess so. Only I never could figure it. What time do you play to-morrow?"

"Three o'clock, sir."

"I'll be there." He opened a desk drawer and dropped the package he had brought from the store into it. "Those can wait," he said. "I like golf, but I guess I'd rather see a good ball game, after all."

"I don't know how good to-morrow's game will be, Mr. Hall," said Sam doubtfully. "Most

of the fellows are pretty young and we make lots of mistakes."

"Well, what's the odds, eh? It's fun, isn't it? Hold on, don't run away, Craig."

"I guess Ill be going, sir, thanks. I've got some things to do at home. I've been away so long things have sort of got behind there."

"Well, you know where to find me. And, look here, do you ever play golf?"

"No, sir, I've never tried it."

"You're not too old," replied the other, with a smile. "Some day you and I'll go out to the Country Club and have a whack at it. You'll like it, and I've got plenty of clubs. Want to?"

"Yes, thanks, only it—it wouldn't be much fun for you."

"How do you know that? You don't know me well enough yet to say what my sort of fun is, Craig." He smiled quizzically. "As a matter of fact, I'd like it. I'll see you to-morrow. By the way, I live at the Amesville Club. Come around some evening and chin. There's something that passed between you and John York that you haven't told me about yet. Good-bye."

Sam shook hands again and took his leave, de-

scending by the stairs to the sixth floor and making his way to a door whose ground-glass bore the legend, "Miss Craig, Stenographer," and from behind which came the busy clatter of a typewriter. Nell Craig was hard at work when Sam entered, and she only nodded and smiled until she had finished the sheet she was on and had pulled it from the carriage. Then she laid it aside and turned to view Sam questioningly. She was a rather pretty girl of eighteen, with light hair and more delicate features than her brother's. She looked alert and capable, and quite businesslike in the plain black gown she wore.

"I saw him," said Sam. "He seems rather nice."

"Of course he does. I told you you'd like him," replied Nell. "He's the nicest customer I have."

"He said you were a smart girl and a good stenographer," answered Sam. "Looks like a case of what-do-you-call-it—mutual admiration."

Nell laughed. "It's more fun working for men you like, Sam. Some of them are rather gruff and horrid. What did he say to you?"

"Nothing much. Said he was glad to know me."

"But didn't you talk at all?"

"Yes, I suppose so. We talked baseball a good deal, I guess."

Nell's nose wrinkled. "Baseball! Is that all you could find to talk of? Did you tell him what Mr. York said about you going to college?"

Sam shook his head. "No. I guess that wouldn't interest him much."

"But you ought to. Maybe he might know of someone who would help you or—or something, Sam."

"I don't believe so. Anyway, I don't want to —to know folks just so's they can help me, do I? He's coming to see us play Lynton to-morrow. And he wants me to go to the Country Club with him some day and learn golf."

"Well, I think you got on splendidly," said Nell delightedly. "Everyone says he's awfully smart, Sam, and I guess he's beginning to get quite a practice. I know I do three times as much work for him as I did at first. I'm sure he will be a splendid man for you to know."

"I don't want to know him just because he might do something for me," objected her brother.

"Folks can be friends for—for other reasons, can't they?"

"Of course, but there's no harm in having friends that are influential, Sam," replied Nell wisely. "Folks who get on, I notice, cultivate friends who can help them. That's plain common sense, Sam."

"Plain common selfishness, you mean," he answered. "All folks can't do that sort of thing, because look at the people who have been nice to me lately. Much good I could do them!"

"I'm not so sure," replied Nell thoughtfully, smiling a little. "There are lots of ways to help a person, Sam. Now, that Mr. York, I dare say you helped him."

"Helped Mr. York!" ejaculated Sam. "I'd like to know how!"

"I don't know that. Maybe, though, you took his mind off some worry, or cheered him up when he was feeling unhappy."

"I guess he never needed cheering up," said Sam. "But I see what you mean, sis. It doesn't sound so bad that way. Well, I must get along. I asked Tom up to supper to-night. He and I are going to practise a little for to-morrow. If you're

going home early, I'll wait around awhile for you."

"I'm not, Sam, not very early to-day, thanks. I'll try to get home by one, though. Tell mother not to wait for me. I've promised all this by twelve, and then I've got some letters to take for Mr. Hall."

"Oh," said Sam musingly, watching Nell deftly introduce a "carbon sandwich" into the carriage of the typewriter. " Mr. Hall."

"Exactly," replied Nell, spacing briskly.

"Hm. I wonder, now——"

"What?" she asked as he stopped.

"I wonder whether Mr. Hall likes me. He sort of seemed to."

"Why shouldn't he?" she asked cheerfully.

"That's so. Maybe I could help him, you know."

"Of course! That is—well, in what way, Sam?"

"There are lots of ways, you said. I might"—Sam edged toward the door—"I might say a good word for him to my sister!"

Nell tossed her head. "You can't tease me about Mr. Hall, Sam," she said untroubledly.

"He and I are good friends, but we're both of us —businessmen!"

"Then what are you blushing for?" demanded Sam meanly.

"I'm not blushing, silly! Do run away and let me get to work!"

"Oh, all right." Sam went out, but, just before the door closed finally behind him, he added softly, "Say, sis!"

"Go away, please!"

"He's not bad-looking, is he?"

The hurried clatter of the machine followed him along the hall until, with a little smile around his eyes, he turned the corner and pressed the elevator signal.

## CHAPTER XXII

### BASES FULL!

Sam was surprised the next afternoon when he reached the high school athletic field to find that the game with Lynton had drawn together quite an audience. Perhaps the fact that the summer weather still held, with no hint as yet of autumn, accounted for the baseball enthusiasm. Usually by the middle of September the fellows were far too engrossed with football to heed the rival game. To-day the school had turned out in force, and there was a fair sprinkling of girls in the stand. Sam met many acquaintances he had not seen since his return and his progress through the gate and around to the dressing-room was slow. Frank Warner, last year's captain of the high school team, for whom Sam had never entertained a very great liking, was quite affable. Frank, as he confided with studied carelessness, was off to college the middle of next week. Sam said he hoped he'd like it.

"Oh, I dare say I'll like it well enough," replied the other. "It's not a bad place, I guess. I'm going to Warner, you know. They turn out some pretty decent teams there. I'm going to have a try for freshman football. I suppose college isn't included in your scheme, Sam."

"Oh, I don't know," replied the other, trying not to show his resentment of Frank's patronising tone. "I rather expect to go to Warner myself next fall. May see you there, Frank. Good luck."

He turned away with a careless nod and sought the dressing-room. And as he went the determination to enter Warner College next year, by hook or crook, took possession of him. Until that moment he had not viewed the idea seriously, in spite of Mr. York's enthusiasm and his own desire, but now he told himself that somehow he would carry it out, if only, he added grimly, to show Frank Warner that he didn't own the college, even if it did have the same name! And then he was in the dressing-room and a shout of welcome arose, and he had to forget his great resolve and return the greetings of the dozen or so fellows present.

There was Tommy Hughes and "Buster" Healey and young Peddie and Sid Morris and Tom and Pete Farrar and Bert Meyers and six or seven more, many of them just back from summer vacations and pleading with Tom to be allowed to join the Blues for the occasion. Tom good-naturedly accepted them all as substitutes and promised to use them as he could, and consequently, when the team gave up the field to Lynton, some twenty minutes later, the home team's bench was much too small to accommodate all the players and substitutes. Mr. Talbot, the high school coach, appeared accompanied by Mr. George, the latter a former league pitcher, who had helped with the team the preceding spring. It was Mr. Talbot who drew Tom's attention to a big, wide-shouldered youth, who was lazily pitching the ball to a substitute catcher at the far side of the diamond.

"You don't mean they're going to pitch that fellow, do you?" asked the coach.

Tom looked and shook his head. "I never saw him before," he said. "Wonder where they got him. They wanted us to agree to play to-day with the same line-up we had before, but I re-

fused because I wanted Sam to catch for us. I guess they thought they'd strengthen themselves some, too. That fellow must be twenty-three or four."

"All of that, I guess. And from the easy way in which he handles that ball I'd say he'd done it before," added Mr. Talbot drily. "Probably a college man they've picked up."

"I don't see," said Tommy Hughes, who had joined them, "why two can't play at that game, sir. You might play for us, Mr. Talbot."

"I guess not. Teams don't usually play their coaches, Hughes."

"But you're not our coach, sir. This isn't the high school team, it's the Blues."

Mr. Talbot laughed. "Really? But I see quite a few familiar faces! You might get Mr. George to play, though."

"He's going to umpire," said Tom. "I just asked him. There's Mr. Hall coming in, though. He used to pitch. We might ask him."

"John Hall? What's he doing here?" Mr. Talbot asked.

"He's a friend of Sam's and we asked him to

come to the game. You know him, don't you, Mr. Talbot?"

"I've met him," replied the coach briefly. Then he smiled. "The fact is, Tom, we're opposing counsel in a case that's been running along since last winter, and we've had to hammer each other pretty hard in court. But I don't know that need keep us from fraternising at a ball game. You'd better go over and rescue him. He's looking for a place to sit down, and the bench is full."

But Sam had seen the newcomer and yielded his seat to him when Tom arrived. Mr. Hall, protesting, sat down and then listened to Tom's message. "I pitch?" he said finally. "Why, Pollock, I haven't had a baseball in my hand for years! I'd like to oblige you, but I'd make a mess of it. You'll do it twice as well as I could."

"If Tom gets into trouble," suggested Sam, "you might try it, Mr. Hall. Would you?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so, if I'm really needed. But give me a chance to limber up, fellows. My arm's pretty stiff, I guess. Swinging a golf club isn't quite the same as pitching a baseball. How does it come, though, that you're letting them use

that man? Looks to me like a professional, Pollock."

"Well, sir, we haven't any sort of an agreement as to who's to play. It doesn't seem quite fair to call on chaps as old as he is, but as they've done it we thought we could."

"I'd say you had every right to, but if I were you I'd see if I couldn't pull through with my regular players. Then if you do win you'll have something to be proud of. How do you, Mr. Talbot? Glad to see you again." Mr. Hall arose and the two lawyers shook hands in a friendly way. "For once, I take it, we're both on the same side!"

"That's so," Mr. Talbot replied, with a smile. "We'll bury our hatchets for this afternoon. Are you going to help these chaps out, Mr. Hall?"

"Oh, I don't think they'll need my help. I was just saying to them that they ought to see what they could do without—er—legal assistance. Take my advice, Pollock, and keep away from lawyers as long as you can. That's right, isn't it, Mr. Talbot?"

"Good advice, but unprofitable to us," was the

reply. "The audience is getting impatient, Tom. Are you ready?"

From the stand came cries of "Play ball!" and Mr. George, struggling to fit to a rather large head a mask that was several sizes too small for him, called, "Batter up!" The Amesville Blues trotted to their places and Lynton presented her first man.

Mr. Talbot and Mr. Hall, left with the substitutes, settled down to watch the game. Mr. Hall sighed comfortably. "This is what I like," he said.

Mr. Talbot looked a question.

"Sitting on a bench," explained the other, "with nothing to do but watch a couple of teams play ball. It beats working all hollow!"

Mr. Talbot laughed. "That's so, but for my part I'd rather be out there playing, Hall."

"Y-yes, so would I, except that I'm too rusty now to try it. Golf's about the only game left to us older chaps."

"You don't look so superannuated. Dare say you could puzzle them a bit yet if you tried. One down," he added as the first Lynton batsman trailed his bat away from the plate.

"Wonder if I could," mused Mr. Hall. "I'd rather like to try, I guess. You went to college in the East, didn't you, Talbot?"

"Yes, Pennsylvania. And you?"

"Warner. We never met you chaps."

"No, I think not. Good work, Healey! That boy can handle them mighty well for a youngster. That's two down. Tom Pollock hasn't got his stride yet, or else he isn't working. Those two chaps make a great team."

"Pollock and Craig? What sort of a fellow is this Craig boy?"

"Just what you see. Quiet, straightforward, honest as they make them. Not exactly brilliant—Look at that for a drop!—not brilliant exactly, but sensible and brainy. Pollock said Sam was a friend of yours, I thought."

"He is. I met him yesterday."

Mr. Talbot smiled. "Not of long standing, then."

"No, the fact is we have a mutual friend, Craig and I. We're just getting acquainted. I like him, though, so far."

"You'll keep on then, for Sam doesn't change much. That's one thing that makes him a mighty

good catcher. He's as steady as a rock. Plays the same game to-day he did yesterday, except that he probably gets a little better all the time. He isn't the sort who have flashes of fine form one day and then slump the next. That's the stuff, Tom! Who's scoring? You, Steve? When does that pitcher of theirs come up? Fifth on the list? I thought so. I guess he's going to make trouble for us. What's his name?"

"Smith," replied Steve Arbuckle.

"Smith! I'll wager he has another name at home," said Mr. Talbot. "If he gets too gay I'll go in there myself, unless you will, Hall."

"I would if I thought I could do any good. We'll see how things turn out. There goes the last man. That's three, isn't it? Now then, Amesville, show what you can do!"

The Blues didn't do much of anything. The mysterious Smith was too much for the first three batsmen and they all went out on strikes. The last one, however, nearly got his base by reason of a third strike which got past the catcher. The ball headed him off at the base, though, and the first inning ended with only six men having seen the plate.

"That's the only thing that may give our boys a look-in," said Mr. Talbot.

"You mean passed balls?" asked Mr. Hall. "That's so; that catcher of theirs is finding it pretty hard to hold the pitcher."

As Steve Arbuckle, last year's manager of the nine, phrased it, setting a neat "k" in the appropriate space, "Another redskin bit the dust!" Which, interpreted, meant that the first Lynton batter had fallen before Tom's curves. That brought Smith, the pitcher, up, and the audience on the bench watched curiously. He was a good-looking chap, but, as Mr. Hall insisted, there was something in his appearance that suggested the professional, or, perhaps, semi-professional ball player. It may have been the easy, untroubled, almost listless manner in which he walked to the plate, rubbed his hands on the seams of his trousers, swung his bat once, and then faced Tom Pollock. "For all the world," muttered Mr. Hall, "as if he was sure of his pay-envelope whether he hits or doesn't."

Tom worked a low one over for a strike and Smith merely glanced at the corner of the plate, over which it had passed. A curve went for a

ball. A second crossed knee-high but was too close for a strike. Smith stood motionless, save for the incessant working of his jaws as he chewed gum. Sam, kneeling, laid four fingers vertically against his mitten, the signal for a slow ball. He argued that with two balls on the pitcher, Smith would expect a fast one over the plate. Tom stepped forward and pitched. There was a solid, resounding thud and the ball shot across the diamond, passed like a bullet between shortstop and third baseman and, far out in the field, struck the sod and bounded into centre fielder's glove. The throw to second was too late to get the runner, however, for the redoubtable Mr. Smith slid beautifully and hooked a foot against the bag before the ball got to him. The small party of Lyntonites shouted delightedly and Mr. Hall and Mr. Talbot exchanged glances.

"Looks as if he'd hit a ball before," said the latter drily.

"Wouldn't wonder if he'd run bases before, too," observed Mr. Talbot. "Lucky thing for us they didn't have men on bases."

"Very. Watch him take his lead now. The chap's a regular player, all right. Look at that!"

Tom had wheeled quickly and thrown to shortstop and Smith had cunningly shot around back of the bag and slid out of reach of the descending arm.

"Pollock will never catch him asleep," said Mr. Talbot.

Tom tried it again a minute later, after he had slipped one across on the next batsman, but the result was the same. Then he gave his attention to the plate and easily disposed of the Lynton third baseman. With two out, the Blues breathed easier, but the trouble was not over for the inning. Smith, who had proved his ability to take a long lead and escape punishment, did what he was expected to and stole third so neatly that, by the time Sam had stepped aside to avoid the batsman, there was no use in making the throw. With two-and-two, Sam called for a low one in the groove, hoping to fool the batter. But that youth managed in some way to connect and the ball went bounding across to shortstop. It would have been a simple matter to get the ball and field it to first in time to retire Lynton, but Gordon Smith "booted" badly and his namesake tallied Lynton's first run. The half was over a minute later

when Sam, signalling for a wide one, threw to second and caught the runner sliding.

Some of the Blues did a little grumbling when they returned to the bench. The general sentiment was to the effect that Smith ought to be protested. Either that or the home team should enlist the services of Mr. Talbot or Mr. Hall. Tom, however, refused to consider the first plan, declaring that if they were going to object to Smith they should have done it before the game started.

"Then why not ask Mr. Talbot to play?" demanded Bert Meyers.

"He doesn't want to. If we can't lick them any other way, though, Mr. Hall will go in and pitch for us."

"We don't need anyone else to pitch," grumbled Buster Healey. "We need someone to hit!"

"Try it yourself, Buster," said Tom. "You're up next."

"That's all right, but that fellow's a big league pitcher. You can't fool me! Tom Hughes says he saw him pitch for Cleveland last year."

"Tommy's a fibber, I guess. Anyway, don't

give up before you get to the plate, Buster. Try a bunt."

Buster did try a bunt, and missed. And then he tried to hit it out and missed. And after that he tried waiting—and missed. And, when he was once more seated comfortably on the bench, he growled uncomplimentary remarks about Pitcher Smith! There was no scoring in that half of the second and none in either half of the third. Tom managed to hold the enemy hitless, although the Lynton captain came very near to reaching first on a smash that almost carried third baseman off his feet. The ball and the runner reached the first sack at about the same instant, and Mr. George's decision might well have been made either way. He ruled the runner out, however, and quickly quelled the mutinous murmurs of the Lynton team. Mr. George, who seemed to be having a very good time of it, conducted himself like a league umpire and there was something in his "That'll do! Play ball!" that discouraged protest.

The fourth inning opened for Lynton with the second clean hit of the game and the batsman reached first with time to spare. Then a hit-and-run resulted in an out at first and put a man on

second. But, although there were moments when things looked desperate for the home team, the inning finally ended without a tally, Smith being coaxed by Tom into hitting a fly to the left fielder, which that youth pulled down. But the Blues fared no better; in fact, not so well, for, although Sam, discarding his new method of short-swinging in favor of slugging, lined out a two-bagger, he never got beyond that station.

The game had resolved itself into a pitchers' battle, with Tom barely holding his own against his more experienced opponent. Only the sharpest sort of fielding behind him and a really wonderful catch of a foul by Sam kept Lynton's score down to that one lone tally. The onlookers were getting full value for their money—the Blues, in view of the more than usual amount of interest in the deciding contest, had audaciously charged fifteen cents for admission—and were sitting well forward in their seats most of the time. Even on the bench the suspense was beginning to tell. Mr. Hall had dragged his discolored Panama well over his eyes, folded his arms, and was watching events with keen interest. Mr. Talbot, smiling as he always did smile when he was anxious, made infre-

quent remarks in low tones to which his neighbor merely nodded.

The fifth passed uneventfully into history, only three men going to bat for the Blues and four for Lynton. Smith mowed down his adversaries mercilessly, seldom pitching more than four balls to each. Tom had to work harder, and in that first of the fifth had a narrow escape from punishment when the Lynton right fielder cracked out what looked to be good for two bases, but resolved itself into a remarkable put-out by the Blues' centre fielder, who ran almost into left garden for the ball and then got it an inch from the turf, receiving from an overwrought audience a burst of applause that quite embarrassed him.

In the sixth the Lynton catcher started things off with a slow bunt that third baseman overran and so reached first base. Steve Arbuckle charitably scored a hit for the batter. Then the head of the visiting team's list came up and things again looked bad for Amesville. But Fortune favored the Blues. Tom deceived the next man and added another strike-out to his credit, and then, when the third batsman hit across to shortstop, that youth tossed to second baseman and

second baseman sped the ball to first, and the Amesville partisans warmly applauded a very pretty double-play.

The Blues threatened in their half of the sixth, but failed to make good the threat. A scratch hit put Tom on first and an error spoiled what should have been a double, and the Blues, for the first time, had two men on. But things fizzled out after that. Strikes quickly disposed of the next two batsmen and the third flied out to second baseman with what, aided by a little luck, might easily have been a hit.

The stand was shouting for action now. Pitchers' battles are interesting enough, but the audience wanted hits. It even demanded them from Lynton, and perhaps that encouragement helped to bring about what followed in that first half of the seventh. A stocky Lynton fielder laid his bat cosily against one of Tom's fast ones and went to first. Tom tried to nail him but failed. The next batsman bunted toward third, and third baseman, running in fast, scooped up the ball neatly and tried for a double. But second baseman was off his bag when the ball got to him and the runner beat him by a matter of inches, and the subse-

quent peg to first was too late. That, then, was the situation when the hard-hitting Mr. Smith picked out a bat and strolled nonchalantly to the plate.

"He ought to pass him," said Mr. Hall anxiously. Mr. Talbot nodded.

"He will."

And he did, to the amusement of the Amesville supporters and the loudly voiced scorn of the Lynton bench. Smith accepted his fate philosophically, tossed his bat aside and walked to first.

Mr. Hall sighed. "Here's where it goes glimmering," he murmured.

"Looks that way," replied Mr. Talbot. "Bases full and none out. It's up to Tom to show some of the real stuff now."

"If he's got enough of it to keep one or two of those chaps from scoring, I'll take my hat off to him," was the reply.

"Well, you can't tell. The weak hitters are coming up and there's always a good chance for a double when the bags are filled. Wouldn't care to step in there and try your hand, would you?"

But Mr. Hall shook his head most decidedly.

"No, sir! I'm scared as it is! I'd never find the plate until the bases were cleared!"

The Lynton coachers were shrieking themselves hoarse and the runners were jumping and shouting with wild enthusiasm as Sam and Tom met halfway between plate and mound. Sam, ball in hand and an eye on third base, talked a moment, and Tom, a speculative gaze set on Mr. Hall, nodded. Then Sam handed the ball to him and walked cheerfully back to the plate, pulling his mask on, and Tom, hitching his trousers, motioned the fielders in.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### A THROW TO SECOND

If there is any situation in a ball game which calls for coolness and steadiness it is that in which the pitcher finds himself surrounded on three sides by base-runners and on the fourth by an adversary whose one desire in life is to hit the ball safely. And when that pitcher knows, besides, that before the fracas is over he or his mates must dispose of three of the enemy, that situation is greatly complicated. It's a time when pitcher and catcher must work together perfectly and when the infield must back them up as never before. A time, too, when the slightest miscue proves fatal.

Tom had not only to keep the next three batsmen from hitting safely, but he must avoid allowing a long fly, since Lynton could score two runs on as many outs if the ball went to the outfielders. And he could give no passes without forcing in a tally. As Mr. Talbot had said, it was up to him to show "real stuff".

Sam crouched and gave his signal. Shortstop got it and relayed it to the outfield. Tom wound his fingers around the ball and the shouting died down a moment. Then off shot the sphere, the Lynton batsman staggered away from the plate, and Mr. George announced "Str-r-rike!"

A burst of applause came from the stand. Third baseman, who had scuttled in toward the plate, moved back again. The Blues were talking back and forth, but their remarks were drowned by the frenzied shouting of the Lynton coachers.

Another delivery that dropped almost into the dust behind the plate went for a ball. A third cut the outer corner, waist-high, and the batsman swung violently at it and missed. Sam signalled and spread his hands wide. "Come on now! You can do it, Tom! Right over and make it good!"

But the ball didn't go right over. Instead it curved widely and the batsman pulled his bat back before he had completed the swing.

"Two balls!" said the umpire.

"Two-and-two, Tom! That's the stuff, old man! You've got him worried now!" called Sam, while from the other members of the team came cheerful shouts of encouragement. "That's the

stuff, Tom! He can't hit you!" "One more just like it, Tom! Let him hit!" "Give him a good one, Tom; we're right here, old man!"

And then, with a change of pace that caught the batsman napping, Tom sped one over the outer edge of the plate and the swinging bat was too late, and Amesville roared and clapped as the disgruntled batsman turned away.

"One gone!" cried Sam, holding up a finger. "Here's the next man, fellows!"

A high one failed to prove the strike that Tom had meant it to be and he followed it with an outshoot that was not offered at and that also went as a ball. The coachers redoubled their noise then.

"You've got him in a hole! He's afraid of you, Sandy! Wait 'em out! Everybody walks now!"

But Tom came back with a slow ball that the batsman struck at too soon and fouled into the stand. Again Tom made the same offering and again the batter was fooled. "Two-and-two, Tom!" said Sam, pawing the dust between his knees before he laid three fingers against his glove. "Only one more now! Cut loose, old man! Show 'em what you have!"

But the signal didn't call for any miracles, merely for an in-shoot, and third baseman crept in an inch or two and poised on his toes. And then away travelled the ball, the bat swung harmlessly, Sam put up a big mitt, and Mr. George shouted, "He's out!"

Mr. Hall's sigh of relief was audible the length of the bench in spite of the deafening plaudits of the crowd beyond, amongst whom none clapped his hands more vigourously than a late arrival, who had just squeezed himself into a seat in the front row, and who now, in order to give vent to his satisfaction, had let his cane slip away from between his knees and had dropped the grey gloves he carried.

Then while the runners on bases, seeing their opportunity fade away, shouted and leaped and scuttled back and forth, daring a throw, the Lynton centre fielder came up, anxious-eyed under a show of assurance. And Tom pitched, a slow ball that seemed of two minds about ever reaching the plate. And the batsman, eager, intense, leaned forward, swung desperately, and the sound of bat and ball meeting rang out. Cries—commands—warnings! First baseman speeding up, Sam whip-

ping off his mask, Tom, with upraised hand. walking toward the plate, head back!

"*Tom! Tom!*" shouted first baseman, slowing down.

"Take it!" gasped Sam, dodging aside.

High up against the blue of the sky the ball floated, a brown speck, and then, momentarily growing larger, down it rushed. From the enemy came conflicting shouts of "Catcher's ball!" "First baseman's got it!" "Drop it! Drop it!" "Can't get it, Pollock, can't get it!" And then, standing astride the plate, the batsman grudgingly backing away, Tom poised himself, hands waiting. A step to the left at the last moment and there followed the comforting thud of ball against glove and the crisp voice of Mr. George, "Foul! He's out!"

The audience shouted loudly, applaudingly, relieving their suspense. The men on bases strode away to their places, picking up their gloves and showing disappointment in every action. The cheering died away and the Blues went to bat. One run was needed to tie, but that one run looked very far away. Smith, the only one of the men left on bases who had appeared to accept the re-

sult philosophically—it was doubtless all in the day's work to him—now pulled his glove on again, swept up the ball from the dirt and faced the batsman. Comparative silence reigned as the Lynton catcher crouched and laid fingers against mitt. Smith nodded imperceptibly and started his wind-up. And at that moment a polite inquiry came from the edge of the grandstand:

"Why did Shreveport let you go, Nick?"

There was a slight falter as the ball shot away, and a quick glance toward the stand as the umpire announced, "One ball!" A murmur of amusement arose from the audience. Again came the wind-up and again came the voice, clear and distinct across the diamond:

"Hard luck, Nick! Back to the bush, eh?"

Off went the ball and again the umpire disapproved, while the pitcher, squaring himself toward the stand, searched the faces there with curious gaze. He was smiling, but the smile didn't look genuine. He failed to find the speaker, for, although many faces were turned toward a lower corner of the stand, Smith didn't think to connect the remarks with the smartly-dressed, gentlemanly-looking man of thirty or so, who sat non-

"From the ear, Sam! From the ear!"

chalantly grasping a cane and a pair of grey gloves between his knees. The stand was laughing and exchanging inquiries. Further away the occupants were on foot, trying to get a glimpse of the speaker. "The chap down there in the derby, I think." "No, the little man with the grey coat; smoking a pipe; see him?" "What did he say, anyhow?" "I couldn't hear, but whatever it was that pitcher didn't like it." "Glad of it! He hasn't any business playing ball with a lot of boys."

Smith pitched again, and once more, although there had been no disturbing comment, he failed to put the ball over for a strike. Scurrying to their places, the Amesville coachers whooped and shouted. "Good eye, George! Wait for your base!" "You've got him now! Here's where we start, fellows! Wow!"

Smith rubbed his hand in the dirt, settled the ball between his fingers and stepped forward.

"Strike—one!" called Mr. George. Lynton applauded.

Smith got the return and walked back toward his box, and as he went his gaze again sought the stand. Those who saw it laughed. The man with

the grey gloves watched imperturbably. Smith got the signal, poised with upraised foot.

"What do you get for to-day, Nick?"

Away went the ball, bounded against the plate and rolled to the net. The batsman raced to first and Amesville, players and friends, laughed and shouted gleefully. Angrily Smith slapped the ball into his glove as it came back, turned, and threw to first. The baseman, not expecting the throw, tried for it and failed, and as the ball shot past his finger-tips and rolled to the seats the runner dashed for second. He had all the time in the world to make the bag and reached it standing up. Smith, still scowling, got his signals, while from all sides came the howls and shrieks of the Amesville players. He was fair game now, it seemed, and in the stand they were kicking their feet and whistling and shouting across at him. Whether he was really being paid to pitch for Lynton none knew, but all were willing to believe it.

The catcher walked down and conferred a moment and Smith nodded grudgingly and went back to the mound. But Smith was annoyed and off his game for once. Two balls followed in succession.

Then came a foul. After that a third ball. Amesville jeered and redoubled her noise. Smith, trying his best to regain command of the ball, took much time between deliveries now, wound up slowly, and sped the ball away with care. But his time had come, for there was a smart *crack*, a streak of grey across the diamond, and the runner on second was digging for third, while down the first-base line raced the batter. Well out of the reach of shortstop or second baseman shot the ball, head-high, as clean and hard a drive to deep centre as one would want to see. Centre fielder reached it as it took its first bound, set himself, and sped the ball to second baseman and second baseman turned and pegged it to the plate. But the Blues had scored the tying run before the ball reached the catcher, and, although that youth threw well and quickly to second, the runner had taken advantage of the throw-in and was sitting comfortably, if breathlessly, on the bag!

How Amesville cheered and clapped and pounded the boards with excited feet! And what a scurrying and jostling there was about the bench as Tom, conferring with Mr. Talbot, chose

a hitter to go to bat for Gordon Smith. It was Pete Farrar who was at last selected. Pete, although a pitcher, was a pretty good hitter in the pinches, and it was Pete who was now to prove the wisdom of his selection. For Pete landed on the second ball offered him and sent it arching into the very right-hand corner of the field! And, although the ball was caught after a run, it didn't reach the infield again until the runner from second was sliding to third!

One out, then, and a man on third base! And one run needed to give the lead to Amesville! And the occupants of the stand on their feet, shouting and stamping and begging a hit! It was Sam who walked to the plate, Sam a little bit nervous and trying to make up his mind whether to follow Mr. York's advice and take a short swing or follow the method he knew best. But he hadn't had time to learn Mr. York's way yet, and when, after sending a ball, Pitcher Smith sped one across the outer corner, knee-high, Sam's effort went for naught. Another ball followed, one that passed the end of Sam's nose and sent him "bucketting" away from the plate. And then there was another that looked good and

again Sam, with shortened bat, tried his level best to connect with it and only popped a fly behind the Lynton bench. With the score two-and-two, Sam let his bat slide down until his hands were grasping the very end of it and then swung it well behind his shoulder and waited. After all, every man to his trade, he thought! Then Smith was stepping forward and the ball was coming and Sam—well, Sam was revolving on one heel and the ball was snugly nestled in the catcher's mitt, and Sam was out!

Amesville howled with disappointment and, in the ardour of the moment, jeered Sam as he walked back to the bench. Tom, passing on his way to the plate, smiled reassuringly and murmured, "Hard luck, Sam!" Sam thought so, too.

On third the runner was dancing back and forth along the path to the plate, and everyone was talking as Tom tapped the end of his bat on the ground, rubbed his hands reflectively on his trouser legs, and then faced the pitcher. Smith was recovering now from his brief and disastrous slump, and Tom secretly had slight hopes of success. But he looked confident enough and smiled as he said something to the Lynton catcher and

received a scowl in reply. The first delivery whizzed past at lightning speed and Tom knew it was a strike before the umpire opened his mouth. Then came a drop that he refused to bite at, although it looked good until the last moment. Again he let one go by, a high one that might have been good or bad, and proved bad. From the bench came encouraging cries, "You've got him in a hole, Tom!" "Stick to him!" "He's got to pitch 'em!" "Here's the one, Tom! Baste it!"

Smith was holding the ball under his chin, watching the catcher's fingers. He shook his head. The catcher signalled again. Smith threw back his arm, raised his foot, and——

"If you're getting more than your railway fare, Nick, you're cheating 'em!"

Smith unwound and pitched, but his tormenter had settled the fate of that ball! A foot over the frantically upstretched hand of the catcher it flew, and Tom, having his wits about him, struck at it wildly and raced to first, while in from third base, urged on by a galloping, shrieking coach, came the runner with the longed-for tally!

Pandemonium reigned! Mr. Hall pounded Mr.

Talbot on the back and Mr. Talbot slapped Mr. Hall on the knee, and the other occupants of the bench danced and capered ecstatically! And while the catcher was recovering the ball and the pitcher was guarding the plate, Tom Pollock rounded first at full speed and sped away to second. And he reached it long before the ball did, and then, getting to his feet and slapping the dust from his clothes, he smiled sweetly at the scowling baseman.

But he never got further, for a foul arched softly into third baseman's glove and that nerve-racking eighth inning was at last over, with the Blues leading insecurely by one run.

"If they can hold it they're all right," murmured Mr. Hall.

"They've got some good hitters coming up," replied Mr. Talbot doubtfully. "Still, if they get one across that will only tie it up again. Tom had better pass that man Smith, I guess."

Lynton came to bat determinedly. But Tom, encouraged by success, pitched as craftily as he knew how and the first batsman struck out without a threat. And it seemed that the next was to follow the same way when Tom had two strikes

and one ball on him. But, although the second man went out ultimately at first, he spoiled several good ones before he finally hit to shortstop.

"Last man!" called Sam as Smith went to the plate. In the stand they were on their feet, a few trickling down the aisles to be ready to start for home. The man with the grey gloves left his seat and, unnoticed, strolled along toward the Blues' bench.

Perhaps Sam made an error of judgment when, instead of passing Smith, he tried to get him for the third out, for, in spite of Tom's best efforts, the Lynton pitcher found one to his liking and leaned against it. Had he hit it fairly it would have tied the score then and there, I think; but he didn't, and the ball, arching toward first, came down safely behind that bag and a few feet inside the foul line. What might have been expected then happened. Smith, taking a daring lead, stole on the second pitch and, although Sam stepped forward swiftly and threw as straight as an arrow, slid to the bag in safety.

That caused Tom to falter for the first time that day and, almost before anyone realised what was

happening, the next batsman was walking to first. Lynton, shouting and dancing, saw her hopes revive. A pinch-hitter was sent in for the next man up. He was a tall, ungainly youth and looked anything but dangerous. But looks are sometimes deceitful. That awkward-appearing youth soon showed himself a canny batsman, and the first thing Tom knew he was in the hole with two balls against him and no strikes! And then, sensing the psychological moment, Lynton called for a double steal as Tom sped the next delivery to the plate. Off for third scudded Smith and down to second flew the next runner. The ball sailed to the plate, as nice a strike as you like, and——

"*Hit it!*" implored the Lynton coachers. "*Hit it!*"

But above their cries sounded a voice that reached Sam with startling, galvanizing effort.

"From the ear, Sam! From the ear!"

And Sam, getting the ball in spite of the batsman's desperate swing, seized it from his mitt, jerked his arm back and, without a move from his place, launched it to second.

In raced Smith from third and down at the middle base the runner was sliding in a cloud of

dust. And then it was all over. Down came second baseman's hand, the runner slid into it, and Mr. George, slackening up as he trotted past, jerked a hand over his shoulder.

"*He's out!*" he cried.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### FIRE!

Mr. Hall and Mr. Talbot, on their feet, smiled at each other in satisfaction as the throng surged over the field.

"Some game!" said the former.

"I should say so! Well, glad to have met you, Hall. And—er—by the way, in regard to that Barry case. Seems to me we might—er——"

"My idea exactly," replied the other heartily. "I'll very gladly advise a settlement to my client. I'll drop around in a day or two and we'll talk it over. Good-bye!"

Mr. Talbot followed the players to the dressing-room, worming his way through a crowd of enthusiastic youths, who had gathered to show their approval of the Blues, and Mr. Hall, seeking a way from the field, was suddenly confronted by the gentleman who carried the cane and the grey gloves. Mr. Hall's face expressed surprise and delight.

"Johnny!" he exclaimed. "Where'd you drop from?"

Mr. York chuckled as he shook hands. "Hello, old man," he said. "You look almost as flabbergasted as Sam Craig did when I yelled."

"Was that you bellowing like a bull?" laughed Mr. Hall. "I might have known it. You're always right there with the advice, Johnny."

"Well, it happened to be good advice this time. It won the game."

"Oh, certainly," scoffed the other. "Craig and the others had nothing to do with it!"

"Craig did what I told him to," replied Mr. York untroubledly. "If he hadn't, he'd never have nailed that man at second and the score would have been tied at this minute—unless the other chaps had won. Come on and let's get out of here."

"When did you arrive?" asked Mr. Hall when they were on the street.

"About an hour ago. Ran down to Columbus last night, got there early this morning, and found I could catch a train over here and see you for a few hours and still get back to Mount Placid to-morrow morning. My train goes at nine-some-

thing, and I'll have to change in the middle of the night. I call that a real proof of love and affection, John."

"Yes, but you're a silly chap if you think I'm going to let you go on to-night."

"Sorry, but I have to be home in the morning. Topsy gets back and I must be there to meet her. Well, how are you?"

"Bully, thanks. I needn't ask how you are; you look as strong as an ox; besides, I got news of you from young Craig. By the way, that was a nice letter you wrote to me about him."

"By Jove, I didn't, did I? Meant to, but quite forgot it. Have you seen him?"

"Yes, he came around one morning and we had a chat. Nice boy."

"Yes, he is. Deserving, too. I never saw a chap his age who looked more like a real catcher, John. I want to do something for him; want to get him into college."

"Hm," said Mr. Hall. "Can't you afford it?"

Mr. York laughed ruefully. "Yes, but he won't let me. At least, not the easy way. I offered to get him a college position and he turned me down; said it wouldn't be honest."

"Good for him! What's your plan, then?"

"Well—I haven't any yet. Thought I'd consult you. That reminds me that I invited him to meet us at your office after dinner."

"My office? Why didn't you have him come to the club?"

"Well, the office is on my way to the station, for one thing, and I won't have much time here. Thought you and I could have some dinner together and a quiet smoke and then walk down to the office and see Craig for a few minutes. All right?"

"Surely, but we must get there before eight or we'll have to climb nine flights of stairs. The elevators stop at eight."

"I think I told him about eight. By the way, did you hear me having fun with Nick Turner?"

"Who's he?"

"Why, that fellow who pitched for Lynton."

"Smith, you mean? So his name is Turner, eh? Was that you who hurled insults at him from the stand?"

"Insults, nothing!" Mr. York chuckled. "I only asked him why he left Shreveport and how

much he was getting to-day and a few things like that. Only asked for information, John."

"Well, you broke up the game, you old schemer! Who is this chap?"

"Nick Turner? Pitched two years ago for Shreveport. Never was much good, though. Knew him the minute I saw him pitch. I dare say those Lynton boys made up a ten-dollar purse to get him to work for them to-day. They ought to be spanked. I was glad you fellows here licked them without any outside assistance."

"They talked about having me pitch for them," replied Mr. Hall, with a smile. "I believe I agreed to do it if necessary."

"Glad you didn't, old man. By the way, I telephoned out to the Country Club when I didn't find you at your office, and they said you weren't there. Just by accident I heard of the ball game from a conductor on a trolley-car and said to myself, 'I'll bet a million the old loafer's out there!' Didn't find you in the stand, though, and didn't think of looking for you below; not until you and another chap got to thumping each other like two kids; saw you then. Those kids played a pretty good game of ball, didn't they? And wasn't that

fellow who pitched for Amesville the same one we saw last spring?"

"Yes, Tom Pollock. He'll make his mark some day, I guess."

"Sure to; he's a good pitcher."

"I didn't mean as a pitcher," replied the other. "I meant as a man. I suppose, though, you can't understand judging anyone except by his ability to play baseball, you crazy fan!"

"I like that! Crazy fan, eh? What were you doing to-day? Why weren't you in your office attending to business? How do you expect to get on in the world if you go to ball games and such puerile affairs?"

"Oh, Saturday's a half holiday here," Mr. Hall laughed. "Here we are. Did you leave your bag here?"

"Yes, the hall porter took charge of it. Show me a tub of cold water, John. I'm two inches deep in train dust!"

It was a few minutes before eight when Sam, turning into Main Street at the corner of the Adams Building, saw Mr. Hall and Mr. York just entering the big doorway. He caught up with them at the elevator and as they were whisked

aloft past dark corridors he had to listen to much praise.

"You played a regular air-tight game, Sam," declared Mr. York. "And that throw to second at the last was a marvel. What did you think when you heard me yell?"

"There wasn't time to think anything," replied Sam. "If I'd stopped to think I'd never have thrown that way, sir. You see, I haven't much chance to try it yet."

"But you *had* tried it, hadn't you?"

"Not in a game, sir; just in practise the other day."

"Well, you certainly pulled it off in grand style! And I want to tell you that if you'd thrown your old way you'd never have caught him. He had an awful lead from first and ran like a rabbit. This our floor?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Hall, "unless you and Craig want to stay there and ride up and down and talk baseball."

"This man, Sam," warned Mr. York, "is an awful hypocrite. He pretends he doesn't care a thing about the game, but some time I'll tell you a few facts about him; like the time he dented in the

immaculate silk topper of a perfectly respectable old gentleman at the White Sox park in Chicago."

"Well, I bought him a new one," laughed Mr. Hall, as he unlocked his door. "Enter, gentlemen."

"Seems to me," said Mr. York, pausing to sniff suspiciously, "I smell smoke. Don't you?"

"Smoke? No, I don't think so. Probably from the railroad. It comes up here when the wind's right. Smell anything, Craig?"

"Yes, sir, I believe there is a smoky smell."

"Well, come on. This building's fireproof, anyway."

"It's what?" demanded Mr. York as he allowed himself to be urged through the door.

"Fireproof, or what they call fireproof."

"It's about as fireproof as a can of gasoline," said the architect as Mr. Hall closed the door and turned the lights on. "You've got nice brick and stone walls, but your partitions are only plaster over lathing and your floors are the best quality of 'fat' pine. If this thing ever did catch on fire and get a nice start it would go like a bundle of shavings. Where's your fire escape?"

"Fire escape? Why, at the back, I think; down the corridor."

"It might be a good idea to find out," returned the other drily. "Well, Sam, how did the hike go?"

"Very well, sir. I found them at Norrence all right and we got back to camp three days later."

"And now you're back at school, I suppose."

"Not until Monday, sir. Will you have this chair, Mr. Hall?"

"No, no, sit still. I'm going to open these windows and get some air in here. Wonderful how this warm weather keeps on. I suppose it's cool up where you are, Johnny."

"Y-yes, but not freezing. Did Sam here tell you that he paid a short visit to Greysides, John?"

"Yes, he told me about it. Must have been frightfully dull for him, poor chap!"

"He didn't say so, but maybe it was."

"I—I had a fine time, sir," said Sam earnestly. The others laughed.

"We had some fine old talks, anyway, didn't we? That brings me to what I wanted to say, Sam. About that college idea, you know. I

haven't worked anything out yet, but—— Look here, John, I certainly do smell smoke, I tell you!"

"Of course you do. I've just opened the windows. It comes from the railroad yards."

"It doesn't smell like coal smoke," Mr. York objected. "Still—let me see, what was I talking about? Oh, about that college scheme, Sam. Ever think you'd like my profession?"

Sam considered. Then he shook his head. "No, sir, I've never thought about it," he answered.

"No inclination toward architecture, eh?"

"I've never thought about it, Mr. York."

"Ever build anything?"

"I built a hen-house once," replied Sam, with a smile. "I like to do that sort of thing, but——"

"Where'd you get your plan?"

"Nowhere; I mean I just—just went ahead and put it together."

"But you planned it in your head first, didn't you?"

"I suppose I did," Sam confessed. "You see, there was the framework."

"Did you do it all yourself? How big was it?"

"About twelve by eight. I did it all myself, usually after school or in the morning. It—it wasn't much."

"Ever do any drawing?"

"I've tried to."

"Like good pictures, handsome buildings, statuary—such things?"

"Yes, sir, very much."

"Still you don't think you'd care to create them, eh?"

"Indeed I would, Mr. York, but I don't believe I ever could. I'd like to build a real house some time, though. You wouldn't have to know so much to do that, would you?"

Mr. York laughed and Mr. Hall smiled sympathetically. "Why, yes, Sam, in order to build a house you've got to know quite a bit. Look here, why don't you think it over and decide whether you'd like to be an architect? If you would, you can start your college course with that end in view; and in the summers there's a place in our office you can have. The wages wouldn't be large, but you'd learn the business and if you made good I guess we'd be glad to give you a real job. You'd have to work hard, though, and study

like the dickens. What do you think about it?"

"I'd like it!" declared Sam decidedly. "If I really could learn enough to—to be an architect——"

"Pshaw," interrupted Mr. Hall, "it's no trick, Craig. All the fellows in my class at college who couldn't make a living at laying brick or driving express wagons went in for architecture. All, that is, except John York. He had so much money he didn't have to make it, and we persuaded him to be an architect because we thought he could do as little harm in that profession as any."

Sam smiled obligingly and Mr. York threatened his friend with a paper-weight.

"You give it a good thinking over, Sam," he continued. "Talk to your folks about it. You don't have to decide before you get to college. And as to college, why, you'll just have to make it somehow, old man. We'll keep our eyes open and see if we can't find a scheme. John and I will get our heads together"—Mr. York was interrupted by a fit of coughing—"and work out something. Look here, John, this place is worse

than Pittsburg! Why, the room is full of smoke. Close the windows if you don't want me to choke to death!"

Mr. Hall started to comply with the request, then apparently changed his mind, and walked to the door that led to the corridor. "It certainly is smoky," he muttered, "and it can't all come from the railroad." He opened the door and staggered back before the cloud of dense and acrid smoke that billowed in. The others leaped to their feet with exclamations of alarm. Mr. Hall slammed the door shut again and faced them.

"Fire," he announced in level tones. "The flames are coming up the elevator well, Johnnie."

"So much for your fireproof building," replied Mr. York, seizing his hat and stick and gloves from the desk. "Which way out, please?"

"I don't know," was the reply. "We're cut off from the stairs and the elevators aren't running. Couldn't use them if they were, I guess."

"But the fire escape, man! Where's that?"

"We'll try it, but it looks bad, Johnnie. I wonder—Put your head out, Craig, and see if there's any sign of excitement below. No? Then it

hasn't been seen." Mr. Hall strode to the telephone and yanked the receiver off. "Fire department," he said. "Emergency!" There was a moment's wait. Mr. York opened the door again and once more the clouds of smoke seethed into the room, whirling and eddying as they met the air from the windows. He looked up and down the corridor, returned, closing the door again, and shook his head as his gaze met that of the man at the telephone.

"Hurry up, John," he said quietly. "It doesn't look pretty to me."

"Hello! Hello! Fire department? The Adams Building's on fire. What? I'm John Hall. Yes. I'm in my office on the tenth floor. Everything looks to be pretty hot underneath. We're going to try to make the fire escape. Goodbye."

Mr. Hall dropped the receiver back to the hook, looked about the office, took a step toward his safe, shrugged his shoulders, and moved toward the door. "Come on, Johnnie," he said quietly. "We'll have to make a run for it. Craig, keep close to us. If we can't make it we'll have to come back here and wait for ladders. All ready? Slip

out and I'll shut this door again. Wait! How about handkerchiefs over our faces?"

"Right!" agreed Mr. York. "Got one, Sam? That's the ticket! Now then, hold your breath and keep together. Which way, John?"

"To the right, past the stairway. Come on!"

Sam never quite forgot that dash for safety. It was a horrible nightmare while it lasted. Somewhere near the stairway a solitary electric bulb had faintly illumined the gloom of the long corridor when they had ascended, but there was no sign of it now. Instead, from the shaft in which the two elevators were operated, a lurid glow poured up, rising and falling as though somewhere in the depths of the building a giant furnace was being stoked. With the light of the flames ascended billows of dun-coloured smoke and showers of sparks, and, listening as they crouched for their dash past the well, they heard the growling roar of the fire, with now and then the sudden crackling of the eager flames which, even as they looked, sent a tiny tongue licking at the flooring. The fire escape was at the rear of the building, down the length of the long corridor, and to reach it they must win past that veritable crater of

heat and smoke. Thrice they tried it and thrice they were beaten back, their eyes blinded, their lungs choked with the scorching fumes. And then, endurance at an end, they staggered desperately back to the office, suffered torments while Mr. Hall fumbled for the knob, and at last, gasping and sobbing, sought relief at the open windows.

It was a full minute before anyone spoke. Then, drawing a deep breath into his parched lungs, Mr. Hall said quietly, with a twisted sort of smile, "Rather silly being roasted alive here, Johnny!"

"We sha'n't be. They'll have us out of here in a minute. There they come now! Hear?"

From somewhere far below came the shriek of the engine siren, sounding nearer and nearer, and the clang of the bells. And at that moment the light in the office went out and they were in darkness.

## CHAPTER XXV

### SAM SIGNALS FOR A FAST ONE

Tom Pollock was working late that evening at Cummings and Wright's. Baseball activities had put him behind with his correspondence and he was trying to catch up with it. Only the light over his desk was burning and the rest of the store was dim and empty. As he sealed and addressed his final letter he glanced at the little tin clock before him. The hour was just short of nine. In the act of opening a drawer to get stamps, he paused with outstretched hand and listened alertly. From down Main Street came the shrill, unmistakable whistle of Amesville's single auto-engine. Tom gathered his letters into a pile, seized his cap, switched out the light, and hurried to the door.

As he stepped onto the sidewalk and turned the key behind him the whistle at the electric light plant burst on the air and, around the corner of Alton Street, a few blocks above, a horse-drawn engine sprang into sight, bell clanging,

sparks flying. Tom joined the throng which, springing seemingly from the very pavement, was hurrying down the main street. Several blocks below, he could see the auto-engine spouting red sparks into the air. The Alton Street hitch, straining at their collars, thudding the pavement with flying hoofs, raced past, followed in a moment by the hose-cart. Bells were ringing at every street corner, it seemed, by the time Tom reached the place where the police were herding the crowd back into the cross streets and where the crew of the auto-engine were already connecting with the hydrant at the corner. As the crowd gave back before the commands of the police, Tom caught sight of several rubber-coated firemen disappearing into the broad entrance of the Adams Building nearly opposite.

For the next few minutes confusion reigned. The hook-and-ladder trundled up, more engines reached the scene, the throb of the pumps began, fuel wagons dashed here and there, parting the crowds, a third alarm boomed over the city. Ladders rose in air, grew in length, swayed, and tottered against the tall building which reared its slender front high above the surrounding roofs.

But Amesville's new sky-scraper had been built only a few months, while her fire-fighting apparatus was far older, and it was at once evident that the longest of the extension ladders would not reach above the sixth story. The crowd still laughed and joked excitedly. The Adams Building was said to be fireproof and so the most that could happen would be the burning-out of an office or two, scarcely serious work for the whole department, they thought. Of course, it was right to be on the safe side, but a third alarm seemed rather absurd, and when, almost immediately, four blasts of the big whistle sounded, many thought the Chief had gone crazy!

So far no sign of fire was to be seen outside the building. Its tier on tier of dark windows gave no hint of what was going on inside. Not a light showed anywhere, save when a fireman appeared at the door with a lantern. But at last the blackness behind the windows paled, took on a murky-red tinge, and smoke began to billow out at the doorway. A great gasp of surprise and horror arose from the watchers. Here, then, was no mere incident to bring an hour's amusement, but a veritable tragedy!

Further and further away the throngs were pushed and ropes were strung across the streets. Tom found himself jammed against a doorway on Bennett Street, his view of a corner of the big building almost cut off by a broad-shouldered man in front of him. Searching backward with his foot, he found a step and managed to ascend it, those behind good-naturedly giving way. From somewhere came the rumour that Chapinsville and even Bow City had been called on for apparatus.

"It would take two hours to get engines here from Bow City," said an excited little man at Tom's elbow. "Anyhow, they ain't got enough pressure to fight that fire. And they ain't got the ladders."

"Good thing it didn't start in the daytime," said another man. "Lots of folks would have been burned up, I guess."

"Don't reckon there's anyone in there now, do you?"

"No. They stop the elevators at eight. Besides, there wasn't a light showing when I got here, and that was before the auto-engine came."

"I heard," said the broad-shouldered man in

front of Tom, "that there's a man on the tenth floor. Don't know how true it is. Hope it's not. If he's up there he'll have to burn—or jump!"

The voice was familiar and Tom leaned forward until he caught a glimpse of the speaker's face. It was Mr. George, and Tom spoke to him eagerly.

"Don't they have life nets, Mr. George?" he asked.

"Hello, Tom! I guess so, but you've got a mighty poor chance to strike a net when you jump from the tenth story. I dare say it's just a fake. Folks imagine all sorts of things at a time like this."

"Do you suppose they can save the building?" Tom asked.

"I don't know how bad the fire is. One fellow said the whole inside was burning, but I don't know how much he knew about it."

"Wish I could see better," muttered Tom.

"Well, maybe if you'll keep close to me we can get a better view," replied the other. "I've got a badge here somewhere. Come on and keep hold of me."

Slowly they wormed their way through the

throng that packed the street solidly from side to side. It seemed a long time before they at last reached the rope and were challenged by a policeman. Mr. George's badge was sufficient, however, and the officer raised the rope. But when Tom started to follow he was thrust back.

"Here, you, back of the rope there!"

"He's with me, Lieutenant," said Mr. George. "It's all right."

The officer, who was not even a sergeant, looked doubtful, but Mr. George's air of authority, and the compliment, also, perhaps, had the desired effect and Tom was allowed to pass. Before them the end of the street lay well-nigh empty, and they hurried along it to the corner of Main Street. Here engines were pumping, lines of hose stretched like mammoth serpents across the wet pavements, and rubber-clad fighters hurried by. About the entrance to the building a knot of privileged persons gathered and thither Mr. George and Tom went. Leaky hose drenched them and busy firemen shouldered them. Shouts and commands sounded above the steady roar of the engines. Two men came through the doorway from the smoky murk beyond. One was the Chief,

the other an assistant. They dripped with water as they paused where Mayor Kelland stood.

"Can't reach him from inside, Mr. Mayor," said the Chief incisively. "Everything's burning around the well. We've got to try the scaling-ladders, I guess. Either that or the net. Tell Cassidy, Jim, to start up on the front. Hall's office is on the side of the building about halfway between front and staircase. You get on the roof over there and see if you can find him. He hasn't shown himself yet, and it may be he got out, but I'm blessed if I see how he could. And no one's seen him around, as far as I can learn. Get a move on, Jim!"

Following the others, Tom and his companion hurried around the side of the building, stumbling over pulsating hose, dodging spouting geysers from leaky connections. From the further sidewalk the dark wall of the building arose straight in air, a many-windowed cliff of stone and brick. Eager and anxious eyes swept as best they could the empty windows of the tenth floor. But a stone cornice at the eighth story cut off the view to some extent, while the lights from the street failed far short of that height.

"He said Mr. Hall," whispered Tom troubledly. "You don't suppose it's John Hall, do you? Why, he was out at the game this afternoon!"

"Isn't there something up there at that ninth window from the corner?" asked Mr. George, peering intently upward. "Have a look, Tom. See where I mean? Something's moving. It's a man! He's standing on the window-ledge! Chief, he's up there! You can see him now!"

Far up a form appeared dimly against the darkness of a window and a shout arose from the group below, and at the moment something struck the pavement with a crash.

The Chief darted forward and picked up a tattered sheet of white paper, from which as he unfolded it broken particles of a glass paper-weight tinkled. "Lantern here!" he shouted. A man held a light and the Chief read the message aloud, "We're cut off, three of us. Find someone to throw a ball with twine on it from opposite roof. We'll light matches to give location. Hurry. Smoke bad, and fire close.

"HALL."

The Chief grunted. "Throw a ball from opposite roof, eh?" He looked upward toward the

top of the five-story bank building behind them. "Where'd we get a ball and who'd throw it if we had it?" he demanded impatiently.

"I'll find a ball, sir, and twine," cried Tom. "And—and I think I could throw it across."

The Chief turned and viewed him doubtfully an instant. Then, "Go to it," he said briskly. "Get your ball and hurry back here. Jerry, you go with him and get him through. Come back here to the bank. Gus, tell Murphy to break an entrance there unless the folks have opened up. It's a poor chance, but we'll try it. They'll never get up there with the scaling-ladders, and I'd hate to see those fellows jump."

Tom didn't hear the last of it, though, for he was already racing around the corner of Main Street, followed by the fireman. At the rope he let the latter break a way through the crowd and pressed closely at his heels. A block away they were free of the throng and Tom sprinted to the store. A minute later he was inside and pulling boxes from a shelf. On the way he had thought it all out. He must have balls, a half-dozen to be on the safe side, and the strongest and lightest silk fishing line there was in stock, and some brass

thumb tacks. The latter he had to search for, and it seemed that he would never find them. But he did, at last, and, his pockets bulging with baseballs, he hurried out again, locked the door, and raced back toward the fire, the panting fireman at his heels. It seemed that they would never make their way through the closely jammed crowd, but Tom's guide used voice and elbows to good effect, and presently they were again ducking under the rope.

At the entrance to the building across from the burning sky-scraper some thirty or forty persons awaited them; the Chief, several assistants, two men with axes, Mayor Kelland, Mr. George, some newspaper reporters, and many other privileged ones.

"All right?" demanded the Chief. "Up we go! Not too many, now! Don't get in the way!"

Tom panted up the stairs beside Mr. George. "I got half a dozen balls," he said, "and some fishing line. I guess you'd better try it. I'm—I'm tuckered. Are they still there?"

"Yes, the fellow's still standing on the ledge. The Chief tried to tell him through his trumpet that we'd sent for balls, but I don't know whether

he heard. They started up with the scaling-ladders, but had to give it up. Didn't have nerve enough, I guess. Here we are, Tom! Up the ladder and through the small door there."

In another moment they were out on the roof, their feet scraping over the pebbles. It was less dark up here than it had been below, for the stars were bright and shed a soft light upon them as they crept cautiously in the wake of a swinging lantern toward the edge of the roof nearest the Adams Building. The wall of that structure loomed darkly like the side of some giant cliff, but in a moment they picked out the waiting figure at the window, still high above them. A spark of yellow light appeared and waved between the wide-spread legs of the figure on the sill.

"They're lighting matches," said the Chief. "All ready there, young fellow?"

"Just a moment," panted Tom. He was coiling his fishing line on the roof in wide loops while Mr. George was fixing an end of it to a ball with the aid of a thumb tack. From across the dim canyon of the side street and well up toward the blue-black sky the little yellow lights flared and burned, and died away. The throng on the roof

grew silent as Mr. George, borrowing the Chief's trumpet, advanced to the very edge of the roof.

"Hello, there!" he shouted.

Very faintly above the noise from below came the answering hail.

"Hello!"

"Can you catch this?"

"I think so! Aim for the light!"

"Who are you?"

"Sam Craig!"

Tom uttered a cry of surprise, and——

"Give me the ball, Mr. George," he said steadily. "I'll do it, sir! Tell Sam I'll throw it, please. And tell him not to reach too far, because we can try again, sir."

"Hello, there! Tom Pollock will throw it! Don't reach for it! We've got plenty of balls! Get that?"

"All right!" came the answer, clearer now. "Tell Tom, 'One finger'!"

## CHAPTER XXVI

### CATCHER CRAIG

Tom smiled a bit tremulously as he heard Sam's plucky answer. "One finger, eh?" he thought. Well, it couldn't be that, for in their signal code one finger meant a fast ball, and it was beyond Tom's or anyone else's power to throw a fast ball at the angle confronting him. Judging the distance as best he might, his gaze on the tiny light that glowed five stories above him, he stepped slowly backward across the roof. Finally he stopped.

"How far is it, do you think?" he asked Mr. George.

"About ninety feet, I'd say," was the answer.

"Just the distance between bases," muttered Tom. "I'll try to get it to him coming down, I guess."

"I wouldn't, Tom. Sam's used to catching them straight. Sock it right at him. If he can see it he'll get it."

"Well," answered Tom doubtfully. He fixed his fingers around the ball, saw that the twine ran unentangled to the coil, which Mr. George had laid beside him, and took a long breath. Now that the moment had come he was losing his nerve, or so it seemed to him. The others drew aside in silence, only a whisper disturbing the stillness up there, although from below came the throb of the busy engines, the murmur of the throngs, the shrill signalling of an engine asking for fuel. Mr. George raised the trumpet to his mouth again.

"All ready, Sam! Get it, boy!"

There was a faint answer, drowned by the quick scraping of Tom's shoes on the loose gravel, and off sped the ball, grey-white in the half-darkness, up and away toward the dimly illumined window and the motionless form poised there. There was a quick gasp from the thrower as he recovered. Then a moment of anxious silence broken by a murmur of disappointment. The ball had gone three feet wide of the window and, although Sam had been seen to lean dangerously to the right, he had failed to touch it, and it had rebounded from the wall and fallen to the street. Eager

hands found the line and began to pull it back over the edge of the roof.

"Pretty near," said Mr. George cheerfully. "A little more to the left next time, Tom. You've got the distance all right."

"My foot slipped on the gravel," panted Tom. "He's saying something, isn't he?"

The Chief commanded silence and from across the darkness came Sam's voice untroubledly, "Three feet further to the left, Tom! I almost had it! Make it be good! Right over now in the groove!"

"Plucky young fellow," growled the Chief. "Got that ball yet?"

"It came off," answered someone. "Here's the cord."

Mr. George quickly stripped the tin-foil from another clean, white ball, looped the end of the cord once more and once more pushed the thumb tack into the tough leather with a grunt. "There you are, Tom," he said. "Here's luck!"

"I guess you'll have to hurry," said a newspaper man. "Looks as if the fire was in there now, don't it?"

It did, for the window, dark before, now shone dull red and Sam's form was silhouetted plainly against it. Tom seized the ball, measured his distance again, silently prayed for success, stepped forward, and threw. A breathless silence then. The figure on the ledge settled back. The ball was lost in the shadow of the tall building. Still those on the roof waited and still no sound came until, suddenly, faintly, there was a hail from above.

"Got it! Tie on your rope!"

It was nearly a fortnight later. Sam, returning at dusk along Main Street from the ball field after an afternoon of fall practice, paused in front of Cummings and Wright's and, one hand thoughtfully fingering the change in his pocket, viewed admiringly the array of football goods displayed in one big window. He had more than half promised the captain of the high school eleven to try for the team as soon as baseball was shelved for the winter. If he did, he reflected, he'd have to spend quite a little money for togs, and, now that he was firmly resolved to go to college next year, he could ill afford to part with

any of his slender horde. Ruminating, he turned his gaze up the street, along which the lights were already beginning to flash. Against the darkening sky the smoke-blackened shell of the Adams Building towered empty and forlorn. A frown creased Sam's forehead as his eyes rested on the tall structure with its broken windows and grimy walls. He had not yet got so he could recall that experience without a sudden sickening sensation at his heart. He sometimes wondered if he would ever be able to forget that awful quarter of an hour up there, the anxious period when, held firmly by Mr. Hall and Mr. York, he had waited there on the outer ledge and hoped against hope that Tom's aim would be true, or the hazardous descent by the rope with the flames almost licking at their heels. They had made him go first, when it had seemed that there was scarce time for all to escape. He remembered how quietly and calmly Mr. Hall had instructed him about wrapping the rope about his leg and lowering himself down, and how Mr. York had assured him that if he went slowly and kept his head he would reach the ground safely. Well, it was something to have gone through such a test with

men like those, he reflected, and now that it was over—his eyes narrowed as he gazed thoughtfully up the busy street—well, now that it was all over he was almost glad that it had happened. Somehow, life had seemed finer and bigger since that night!

A tapping on the broad pane beside him caused him to look around. At the back of the window Tom Pollock was knocking on the glass with a hockey stick and beckoning him inside. Sam smiled faintly, nodded, and entered. The store held few customers, and none on the sporting goods side. Tom closed the panel at the back of the window and turned with a smile.

"Ah," he said, "Mr. Craig, I believe! Champion ten-story catcher of the Sky-scraper League! What were you doing out there, Sam? Going to sleep?"

"Just—just thinking," replied Sam soberly.

"You want to break yourself of that," responded Tom, with a warning shake of his head. "It'll get to be a habit. What's new? How did practice go? Sorry I had to cut to-day."

"Pretty fair, I think. I guess I'll have to call it off soon. A lot of the fellows are trying for

the football team. Sidney left to-day; Buster, too."

"Yes, you couldn't keep Sid away from a pigskin if you tied him. By the way, Mr. Hall was in here about an hour ago asking for you. Said I was to tell you to go around to the club this evening. Wants to see you about something. I think he said he'd had a letter from Mr. York."

Sam nodded. "Yes, I guess I know what it is," he said. "I had a letter from Mr. York this morning; or, rather, a note. He—he's got the contract, Tom."

"For the new Adams Building? That's good. Hope they'll make it fireproof this time. How is he?"

"All right, I guess. He didn't say. He didn't write much; only five or six lines. He said his firm had got the contract and that—that he'd have a job for me next month."

"Really? Bully for you, Sam! Say, that's fine! I'm awfully glad. What are you going to do—stand on the top of the building and catch beams and things?"

"N-no, I guess it will be something about the office. I don't know yet. But I'm mighty glad

because I guess I'll be able to make enough to start college next fall."

"Pshaw, you won't need money, Sam! Why, I'll bet there isn't a college in the country that wouldn't be tickled to get as celebrated a chap as you! You know, old man, you're a bit of a hero. Mr. Hall says you had a whole page to yourself in one of the New York papers on Sunday."

"I wish they wouldn't," said Sam. Then a twinkle danced in his eyes. "Anyway, they had you in it, too, I'll bet."

"Oh, yes, but I wasn't important. He said there was a fine picture of you standing on a window-ledge with mask and mitt and leg guards! I must get that paper and see it." And Tom chuckled.

Sam smiled a little over the idea of the mask and mitt. Then, soberly, he said: "You were the real hero of that stunt, Tom. If you hadn't thrown that ball just right the time you did—well, you wouldn't have had many more tries!"

"No, that's a fact," agreed the other gravely. "It wasn't any time to get our signals mixed, was it, Sam?"

"No, and you—you certainly were fine, Tom. I

don't know whether I ever exactly told you how —how awfully grateful——"

"Don't mention it!" exclaimed Tom hurriedly. Then, with a grin, "It was a pleasure, sir, I assure you," he said gaily. "I always esteem it a great honour to pitch to Catcher Craig."

THE END